

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 38

Daomerge

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller...than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: First Autarch Meeting

Vastheaven Palace.

Ever since the Jadefire Realm affair had concluded, the disciples of Vastheaven Palace had returned to their headquarters. Vastheaven Palace was now even more bustling than it had been in the past.

“Ji Ning.” Emperor Solesky called out as he hurried towards Ning’s residence. Emperor Solesky’s true body was now within the Dao Alliance’s Palace of Immortals as one of their members, and he was on quite good terms with Emperor Goldisle and Emperor Blackcloud.

“Big brother Solesky, what has you in such a rush?” The golden-robed Ning was fishing relaxedly by himself.

“Something big just happened!” Emperor Solesky’s eyes were huge and round as he whispered, “The Dao Alliance just received word and told me to inform you about this right away. Autarch Titanos has already left his estate and is heading towards the Flamedragon Realmverse. He could be arriving any moment now!”

“WHAT!?” Ning’s entire body trembled for a moment before he came back to his senses. He tossed down the fishing rod, jumped to his feet, then said frantically: “When is Autarch Titanos arriving and where?”

“We can’t be sure. His estate is extremely far away from us, but as an Autarch he moves incredibly fast. No one knows how long it would take him to get here!” Emperor Solesky continued, “He might appear in the next instant, but if he takes a few detours on the way it might take him a few chaos cycles.”

Ning felt his entire body tense up. Even though his Dao-heart was tremendously resilient, he still felt extremely nervous. “He’s finally coming.” Ning let out a long breath, his eyes filled with excitement. “I’ve waited so long and fought so hard. Finally, this day has come.”

Not even the Daomerge would’ve inspired such excitement in Ning. He truly was eager to be able to bring Yu Wei back to life and reunite with

her. With his wife by his side, he would be more than satisfied with living a life of a hundred thousand chaos cycles. This would be far better than an endless life of loneliness.

“Right, right! The realmship.” Ning suddenly came back to his senses. “I need to go bring the realmship back and be ready for him at any moment.” Autarch Titanos needed Ning to give him the realmship in exchange for his help. It would be extremely awkward if Ning didn’t have the realmship on him!

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The Terror Starsea. The Jadefire Realm. The Flamewing God remained trapped within the second hidden room, while Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw were by its side.

“Flamewing,” Ning called out.

“Master,” Flamewing responded obediently. After spending five chaos cycles with Ning, it had grown accustomed to addressing Ning as ‘master’.

“I need to go out and handle some business. It shouldn’t take too long,” Ning said.

“You are going to come back, right?” Flamewing felt a strong sense of attachment towards Ning.

Ning couldn’t help but feel a bit of a headache. The legendary Chaos Primordial was like a child! All Ning could do was to say, “Don’t worry, I’ll definitely come back. Just take a quick nap. I’ll be back by the time you wake up. The next time I see you, it’ll be time for me to deal with those chains of yours.”

“Alright.” Flamewing nodded repeatedly.

“We’re off.” Ning immediately turned and left through the giant, ancient copper gate, with Azurefiend and Whitethaw flying out by his side.

Flamewing watched as Ning left. Once the great gate swung shut, it finally sat back down once again. However, it had long ago grown accustomed to loneliness, and so it quickly shut its eyes and entered a

state of slumber once more.

A short while later, Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw reached the other hidden room within the Jadefire Realm.

“So this is the Jadefire Realm’s formation-diagram?” Hegemon Azurefiend stared at the enormous flower-like formation-diagram on the altar.

“Yes. What, are you capable of understanding and mastering it?” Ning laughed.

“I don’t understand it at all. This formation seems very odd; it’s completely different from the other formations I’ve analyzed.” Hegemon Azurefiend shook his head.

Ning smiled. The Sithe had indeed embarked upon a unique path with regards to the art of formations, a path that was very different from the ones which cultivators walked. Without knowing the proper techniques, it truly would be extremely difficult to even understand how these formations worked.

Whoosh. Ning waved his hand, causing a stream of fire to instantly descend from him and form into the body of an Emperor-class golem. This was one of the many golems which Ning had acquired from the Sithe ruins in the Stone Hellephant Wall.

“This is the control technique which governs the flaming passageways and the outermost areas in the Jadefire Realm.” Ning tossed a jade slip over. “Hurry up and master it. Once you do, take control over the Jadefire Realm for me.”

“Yes,” the flaming Emperor-class golem said respectfully. Ning had only given it the most basic of control techniques. Now that Ning fully understood how the technique worked, it was easy for him to develop a new control techniques of his own. However, this technique could only be used to control the outer perimeter and the flaming passageways. The techniques governing the prison regions were all quite complex. For now, not even Ning was able to tell them apart.

“Remember, there is a Hegemon within the flaming passageways.” Ning pointed at a tiny little dot located in one of the countless passageways. “Keep a close watch on him! Once he starts to run around, immediately activate some of the most powerful mechanisms and kill him, or at least trap him and send him into the prison regions.”

“Understood,” the Emperor-class golem responded.

“But of course, he’s so terrified of dying that I expect he won’t move around.” After making the necessary arrangements, Ning relaxed slightly. “This place is now in your hands. Azurefiend, Whitethaw, let’s go.”

Ning didn’t feel the need to hold things back from Azurefiend, as the lifeblood oaths binding a retainer were quite strong. He had to go back to the Flamedragon Realmverse, which meant he couldn’t continue to use a divine power clone to maintain the formation-diagram. As a result, his only option was to rely on his golems. Emperor-class golems were extremely intelligent, and it wouldn’t be hard for them to control some basic formations. It must be remembered that when major powers died, they’d often use formation-spirits, treasure-spirits, or powerful golems to control their legacy sites and await their successors.

Golems had infinite lifespans and would never betray their master unless they were forcibly bound. Thus, both the Sithe and the cultivators delighted in using golems.

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After having finished with his other arrangements, Ning led the two in flying in the realmship and departing from the flaming passageways. The Jadefire Realm simply had far too many of those flaming passageways, and they were all extremely long. Even though the realmship had been repaired and was able to fly quite quickly, it still took them two days to pass through the flaming passageways.

“There’s the exit.” Ning was quite familiar with the formation-diagram and thus knew where the breaches in the Jadefire Realm were. It had been thoroughly wrecked, after all. Ning was able to easily exit while following the breaches.

Swoosh. The realmship charged through the flames, quickly discovering a giant, cavernous gap which it was able to exit through. After flying for roughly an hour and repeatedly changing directions, they managed to leave the Jadefire Realm.

“We need to get back to the Flamedragon Realmverse as soon as possible. Autarch Titanos could come at any moment.” Ning was so excited that his eyes were slightly bloodshot. This was the most important goal in his path of cultivation, after all.

“Hey kid! Calm down, there’s no rush.” A voice suddenly rang out by his ears.

Ning had just flown out of the Jadefire Realm. He couldn’t help but turn his head, startled, only to see a bald black-robed elder standing in the void in front of him. This bald old man had a pair of golden eyes and two fleshy antennae growing out of his head. The antennae waved at him in an amused fashion, while the old man had a smile on his face as well. Anyone who saw him would feel the urge to laugh.

Whoosh. The bald old man suddenly vanished into thin air.

“Eh?” Ning was startled. “Where did he go?”

“I’m right here,” the bald old man said merrily.

Ning turned his head, only to realize that the bald old man was standing right next to him. Ning couldn’t help but feel speechless. The old man had been able to enter the realmship without him even realizing it... this was a level of ability that vastly outstripped Ning’s imagination. It must be remembered that he was the master of the realmship, and that he was in complete control of it... and yet, this person had suddenly appeared right before him inside of it.

“Darknorth greets you, Autarch.” Ning hurriedly bowed respectfully.

“Azurefiend greets you, Autarch,” Hegemon Azurefiend said respectfully as well.

Whitethaw stood right next to Ning. He bowed respectfully as well, but he didn’t say a word.

Both Ning and Azurefiend were major powers of extraordinary power ability. They had seen far more than most, and they naturally saw right away how terrifying this bald old man was. For example... they couldn't see any lines of karma binding this bald old man at all. It must be remembered that any cultivator who was alive would be linked to others by karma, but they weren't able to sense any karma lines at all on the old man. This was absolutely inconceivable.

"Quite clever." The bald old man chortled as he turned his gaze towards the Jadefire Realm. "The Seven Flaming Hells. Truly impressive. The Sithe truly were formidable, to be able to capture a Chaos Primordial and use it as their energy source for this facility and then absorb its power with such ease. Judging from that Chaos Primordial's truesoul... it should already have a master. Is it you, kid?" The bald old man looked at Ning.

Ning was stunned. He had always heard of how incredible Autarchs were, but he never would've imagined that an Autarch would be able to simply glance at the Jadefire Realm and immediately know that there was a Chaos Primordial there, AND know that Ning was its master. No wonder even the mighty Sithe had ended up falling before the Autarchs and the cultivator civilizations. The Autarchs were simply incredible. They had all reached utterly inconceivable levels of power.

To Autarchs, even Chaos Primordials were nothing. They were capable of slaying the creatures with ease.

"Yes, I am its master," Ning said.

Chapter 2: Ning's Nervousness

“Chaos Primordials are born from within the prime essences of the vast Chaosverse. They are blessed by the prime essences and born with tremendous karmic luck. The vast majority of cultivators will never have a chance to even encounter one of these creatures.” The bald old man looked at Ning, a smile on his face as he offered his congratulations: “Although you also have tremendous karmic luck, you still can’t compare to that Chaos Primordial. I imagine it wasn’t easy for you to run into it.”

Ji Ning was briefly startled, but he quickly understood. It was indeed true that running into Chaos Primordials was incredibly rare, due to how much the prime essences of the Chaosverse doted upon them. Indeed, Ning himself had entered the Jadefire Realm many chaos cycles ago, but he had to undergo countless hardships before managing to solve the formation-diagram and thus have the chance to meet the Chaos Primordial.

However, from another perspective, this was also proof that in the long run, being ‘blessed with karmic luck’ and ‘beloved by the prime essences’ didn’t count for THAT much. The Chaos Primordial had still been trapped by the Sithe for countless years, right?

“I had to solve the Jadefire Realm’s formation-diagram before I was able to meet the Chaos Primordial,” Ning said.

“Treat it well. It will be of great help to you. Come, let us go to your homeland,” the bald old man said.

Whoosh. As soon as these words came out, spacetime twisted around them and everything became illusory and dreamlike. By the time spacetime went back to normal, Ning immediately saw a chaosworld off in the distance.

“We’ve already left the Terror Starsea?” Ning was immediately able to sense the location of his avatar and Primaltwin and thus knew where he was. He couldn’t help but feel a sense of awe, but he was able to keep his expression calm.

“I’ll take you to my homeland right away, senior,” Ning said.

“Wait, wait. Not just yet. I teleported your realmship here because there’s a young fellow that needs rescuing,” the bald old man immediately called out. With a swoosh, he flew out of the realmship and towards that distant chaosworld.

“Needs rescuing? Needs rescuing by an exalted AUTARCH?!” Ning and Azurefiend shared a glance, both feeling rather puzzled.

Swoosh. Swoosh. Ning put away the realmship for now, then flew towards that chaosworld as well. Azurefiend and Whitethaw followed close behind. Once they flew into the chaosworld...

“Haha, Daolord Cleardust, you’ve been trapped with my formation and have nowhere to run. In a mere thirty thousand years, the power of my formation will have ground you into dust and wiped out your truesoul. Did you think, young fellow, that you would be able to defeat me just because you broke through to become a Samsara Daolord? This chaosworld shall remain mine. No one can violate my will!” A red-haired old man was seated at the peak of a mountain, staring downwards into a valley.

The valley was filled with rolling black clouds and billowing flames. Every so often, one could see a fragile-looking youth seated in the air in the lotus position. He was suffering all sorts of torment. The youth sat there in the lotus position, murmuring a chant while completely ignoring the red-haired elder.

“I established this chaosworld as my estate, and thus all the living creatures within it are subject to my will. All shall be as I will it! I never would’ve imagined that this chaosworld would actually give birth to a freakishly talented genius like yourself. You actually managed to reach the Samsara Daolord level because of a few so-called legacies I left behind out of boredom.” The red-haired elder was in a good mood, as victory was clearly at hand. “You, a Daolord of the First Step, actually managed to fight me to a standstill even though I am a Daolord of the Third Step. I truly admire you very much. In the outside world, someone as talented as you would probably be recruited by one of the major organizations. Unfortunately, you shall die here.”

“Yes, you shall die here!” A voice suddenly rang out, followed by a giant foot descending from the heavens. Sploosh! The giant foot stomped down upon the red-haired old man, smushing him into the ground. The red-haired man instantly stopped moving.

The owner of the foot descended from the heavens. It was a merry-looking bald old man. Moments later, Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw all descended as well.

“No wonder this chaosworld was protected by so many barriers. I imagine most Daolords of the Second Step and even Daolords of the Third Step would be unable to pass through them,” Ning sent mentally. “So this was the estate of that deceased Daolord over there.”

“Autarch Titanos intervened for the sake of that kid?” Azurefiend glanced downwards at the valley.

The bald old man had already walked down into the valley, easily tearing apart and destroying the formations. He was chatting with that fragile-looking youth, whose gaze was calm and distant. It was as though the youth had long ago seen and suffered countless torments and had endured everything one could endure.

“Hahaha. That Daolord over there... just judging from his gaze, I can sense that he has experienced much pain,” Azurefiend said.

“This chaosworld is an absolute hell.” Ning swept the area with his gaze, seeing everything there was to see within this chaosworld. That demonic Daolord had clearly delighted in tormenting and abusing all the living creatures of this chaosworld, treating them as his playthings.

A short while later... “Time to go.” The bald old man returned to Ning’s side.

“Alright.” Ning and Azurefiend cast a final glance to ‘Daolord Cleardust’, who remained within the gorge. Daolord Cleardust looked back at these foreign cultivators, a slightly confused look in his eyes. He had no idea who was before him. One was a terrifyingly powerful golem, one was a supremely talented Daolord, the third was a Hegemon, and the old man was an Autarch, supreme amongst the cultivator civilizations.

“Autarch.” While flying away from the chaosworld, Azurefiend couldn’t help but ask, “Why did you intervene to save a Daolord of the First Step?”

“Couldn’t you sense how much karmic luck swirled around him? Of course I had to aid him,” the bald old man said with a merry grin.

“You have to help him because of his karmic luck?” Ning was puzzled. Karmic luck was just a side benefit; personal power was what truly mattered. No amount of karmic luck would protect you in the face of overwhelming power!

“Of course!” The bald old man said hurriedly, “You clearly don’t understand. Each time I help someone like him out, my own karmic luck increases as well. When I act in accordance with the will of the prime essences of the Chaosverse, my own karmic luck will continuously increase. Do you know what will happen once your karmic luck reaches an incredibly high level?”

“What will happen?” Ning was curious.

“All sorts of rare and incredible treasures will appear out of nowhere, almost as though they are throwing themselves at me. I could choose a random boulder to sit on, and then I’d find out that it was part of an incredibly rare ore vein. Any random tree I chose to take shade under could possibly be a spirit-fruit tree of great value.” The bald old man sighed. “All sorts of treasures will throw themselves at me. It is quite the pleasant experience.”

“Buuut... I’ve come here to help you reverse spacetime to revive a Celestial Immortal. That goes against the will of the Chaosverse.” The bald old man sighed again. “Looks like my karmic luck is going to drop by quite a bit.”

An awkward look appeared on Ning’s face.

“Haha, I’m just teasing you. Honestly, karmic luck doesn’t matter all that much. Once you’ve trained to my level, it really makes no difference at all. It’s just a little game we play to keep score.” The bald old man swept the area with his gaze. Boom! Suddenly, the space around them seemed to retreat as karma, spacetime, and luck all withdrew from them. A field of

absolute void was formed around them, a region of complete stillness.

Ning and Azurefiend could both sense that they were completely unable to move. This invisible pressure had forced away even the prime essences of the Chaosverse, to say nothing of them.

“See this? This area is now devoid of the prime essences of the Chaosverse. This is now my absolute domain.” The bald old man laughed.

Ning suddenly remembered how the area around the Azureflower Estate was similarly devoid of all outside types of energy. But of course, the effect wasn’t as strong as it was right now, where Autarch Titanos was personally and actively maintaining the effect.

“In the end, personal power is what matters the most. Kid, as a practitioner of an Omega Dao, if you somehow manage to succeed in your Daomerge you’ll probably understand.” The bald old man continued, “Alright, hurry up and bring out your realmship. Lead me to your homeland.”

“Alright.” Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw could sense that they were able to move again. They immediately entered the realmship. Whoosh! After just a short spacetime blink, the realmship appeared within the void outside the new Three Realms.

The bald old man stared at the distant Three Realms, then let out a surprised breath: “What an impressive chaosworld! Just by looking at it, I can tell that it is extraordinary. No wonder it was able to produce a freak of a Daolord like yourself, someone who trains in an Omega Dao!”

“It has already been destroyed once.” Ning pointed at the void next to the new Three Realms. “That place over there used to be my homeland, a world within the Three Realms which was known as the ‘Grand Xia world’. My Dao-companion used to live by my side there.”

The original Three Realms took up much more space than the new one, as it had been shattered and splintered into countless pieces. There had been a Celestial Realm, a Netherworld Kingdom, and three thousand major worlds that had been scattered across an enormous amount of space. The new Three Realms was a single complete entity which took up

much less space. The location the Grand Xia had been in was now just an empty patch of space.

“Oh. Over here, right?” The bald old man walked over and chuckled while spacetime churned around him and began to reverse at increasingly high speeds.

Whooooosh. Spacetime continued to reverse, and they quickly reached the scene of the old Three Realms.

“Slow down a bit,” Ning urged.

“Don’t worry. I’ll find the old you first,” the bald old man said. “Oh. There you are.” A projection of the Grand Xia had appeared, centered around the old Black-White College. The scene was that of Ning, who had just entered the Black-White College. He was about to begin his duel against Yu Wei.

“The Black-White College?” The bald old man pointed towards Yu Wei’s image. “That should be your wife, yes?”

“Yes.” Ning felt as though his blood was boiling from nervousness. It had been a long, long time since he had been this nervous.

“It seems she really did have a big impact on you.” The bald old man laughed. “Wait for me to reverse the flows of spacetime and bring her back to life!”

Chapter 3: Origins

“Oh, right. Where’s the realmship? I conduct business fairly. I have to take your realmship in payment for reviving your Dao-companion.” The old man looked at Ning.

“Here it is.” At a time like this, the realmship meant absolutely nothing to Ji Ning. He immediately waved his hand, sending the palm-sized realmship flying over. Hegemon Azurefiend watched with a rather agonized look in his eyes, but all he could do was sigh to himself: “Darknorth truly is willing to sacrifice anything in order to revive his Dao-companion. A realmship has been lost, just like that.”

The bald old man cared as little about the realmship as Ning did. He waved his hand to accept it, then said solemnly: “None of you are to disturb me. Stay far away from me as well.”

“Alright.” Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw all immediately retreated off into the distance.

“Chaosverse, I’ve come to steal yet another truesoul fragment from you.” A hint of a smile appeared on the bald old man’s lips. He then reached out with both hands, the fleshy antennae on his head wriggling as a terrifying amount of power began to spread out from him. He became the absolute master of this area of space.

“Condense.” The bald old man waved a finger, causing the illusory phantom of the black-robed Yu Wei to begin to light up.

Boom. Boom. Boom. Countless specks of light began to appear deep within the incredibly distant prime essences of the Chaosverse. They flew into the illusory phantom of the black-robed Yu Wei, pulling at her.

“It has begun.” Ning watched nervously. The illusory Yu Wei was nothing more than a phantom of the past. In order to make the phantom real, it had to have a truesoul within it! However, when the living beings of the Three Realms lost their truesouls, those truesouls would return to where they came from – the prime essences of the Chaosverse.

“To reverse spacetime and revive someone who perished... this is my first time seeing an Autarch do such a thing,” Hegemon Azurefiend sent mentally. “Look at how nervous your master is!”

Whitethaw looked at Ning, then nodded and sent back, “This is my master’s deepest desire. Of course he is nervous.”

“For an ordinary mortal to train to such heights and then be able to ask an Autarch to help him out... I truly do feel a great deal of admiration for him.” Azurefiend sighed.

Both Azurefiend and Whitethaw were fairly calm. They watched this rare sight with interest and appreciation, but the only thing Ning felt was nervousness.

In that empty region of space, the bald old Autarch Titanos had already completely unleashed his power. The black-robed Yu Wei was glimmering with countless specks of light, and she was becoming increasingly ‘real’. However... gradually, the gathering of the light seemed to slow down. Some of the light actually started to disappear.

“Eh?!” The bald old man’s face tightened, while Ning’s heart shuddered.

“Get over here!” A hint of anger flashed past the bald old man’s face, and more light instantly began to gather around Yu Wei’s phantom once more. The bald old man’s face became increasingly ugly to behold, but Yu Wei’s body began to become more and more real. Slowly, the light that gathered over her eyes caused a look of sentience to appear within her eyes.

“Senior apprentice-sister.” Ning looked at Yu Wei.

The light-bathed Yu Wei looked back at Ning. A hint of life flashed through her eyes. She was no longer a phantom of the past; it was as though a real person was looking back at Ning. Their gazes met... and in that instant, Ning suddenly felt as though it was all worth it. Anything was worth it, so long as she could come back to life.

“Ugh!” The bald old man suddenly spat out a mouthful of blood. His face was ashen, and Yu Wei’s phantom immediately began to crumble apart as the countless specks of light began to dissipate.

“No...!” Ning frantically reached out, wanting to claw back the dissipating light. Alas, the power of the prime essences of the Chaosverse caused all the specks of light to disappear into nothingness.

“DAMNIT!” The bald old man’s face was ashen. He was so angry that even the two fleshy antennae on his head were quivering with rage. He howled furiously, “Prime essences of the Chaosverse, the truesoul fragments of countless living beings have returned to you upon death. All I want is to bring a single one of them back! A single truesoul is nothing to you! Why must you fight me to the death like this? Why must you seize it back!”

The binding power of the prime essences of the Chaosverse was simply too great. Normally, Hegemons and even Otherverse Lords did not have the power to try and resist it. Only Autarchs were qualified to make the attempt.

“Is it worth it?! Is it worth it for you to spend so much effort in fighting me?!” The old man’s entire body was trembling from rage. The area around him, however, remained completely in silence. The prime essences of the Chaosverse made no response at all.

The bald old man forced down his rage, then turned to look at Ning.

“Autarch.” Ning looked at Autarch Titanos.

“Where did your Dao-companion come from? I should be able to revive even a World God with ease, to say nothing of a Celestial Immortal like her.” The bald old man stared at Ning. “Just now, when I tried to reverse spacetime and revive your wife, the prime essences of the Chaosverse fought me so hard, I felt as though I was trying to revive a Hegemon! Even if I killed myself trying to bring her back, I still wouldn’t stand much of a chance.”

Ning’s face turned ashen as well. What?! An Autarch could kill himself trying to revive Yu Wei? Ning knew that there was no need for Autarch Titanos to lie to someone like him. In fact, Autarch Titanos had tried so hard that he had suffered an injury because of it, vomiting blood as a result.

“How is this possible? She’s nothing more than an ordinary Celestial Immortal of the Three Realms. There was nothing special about her.” Ning couldn’t understand either. “Why can’t you revive her? This makes no sense.”

“Let me take a closer look at things.” The bald old man turned to stare at the surrounding void. Rumble... countless images began to flicker through the void. These images included what had happened in the new Three Realms, the events of the old Three Realms, the collision between the Pangu Chaosworld and the Seamless Chaosworld, and even the images of what had happened prior to the Pangu Chaosworld being born.

Countless images flashed through the void around him...

“So that’s how it is.” The bald old man nodded slowly.

“Autarch?” Ning looked at the bald old man.

“During the Dawn War, when we fought against the Sithe... we had a number of Autarchs on our side,” the bald old man said. “One of them was named Autarch Awakener.”

“Autarch Awakener?” Hegemon Azurefiend had a puzzled look on his face.

Ning, however, turned pale. He naturally knew that Autarch Awakener had been the master of the Azureflower Estate. He immediately said, “This has something to do with Autarch Awakener?”

“You seem to have heard of Awakener before.” The bald old man laughed. “The number of people in the vast Chaosverse who were able to become Autarchs can be counted on just two hands! Autarch Awakener died long ago. It could be considered a form of suicide.”

“He died? Suicided?” Azurefiend became increasingly confused. Ning, however, had heard this long ago and thus simply continued to listen attentively.

“Darknorth, kid... Worldhearts can be naturally birthed from the primordial chaos, but there is also a second way a chaosworld’s Worldheart can be formed. Do you know what that way is?” The bald old

man looked at Ning.

“An Eternal Emperor’s godgems,” Ning said. This was a secret, but Ning had studied the countless techniques Autarch Awakener had acquired from the Sithe and the cultivator civilizations. Thus, he knew these secrets long ago.

A Samsara Daolord could have at most a total of 108,000 godgems in his divine body. Once he completed his Daomerge, those godgems would become Eternal godgems and be filled with miraculous powers.

If an Eternal Emperor perished, each of his godgems could give birth to a new chaosworld. The living beings in this chaosworld would generally be fairly special, and it would give birth to experts at a slightly higher rate. However, the difference between these chaosworlds and ordinary chaosworlds wasn’t all that great. However, the godgems left behind by a deceased Hegemon could give birth to extremely special chaosworlds.

“Correct.” The bald old man nodded. “As you may know, your Three Realms was born from a collision between the Pangu Chaosworld and the Seamless Chaosworld... but what you didn’t know was that each was formed from a godgem.”

“A godgem?” Ning immediately thought back to the fused and dazzlingly beautiful Worldheart he had seen when the old Three Realms had been destroyed.

“Yes. Godgems from Autarch Awakener!” the bald old man said.

“What?!” Azurefiend called out in shock.

“An Autarch’s godgems?!” Ning was stunned as well.

“Autarch Awakener died, but he made preparations prior to his death. He made arrangements for all 108,000 of his godgems,” the bald old man said. “Two of them were sent into the void and ended up becoming a chaosworld.”

“The living beings in these two chaosworlds were all blessed with incredible talent. These two chaosworlds vastly outstripped all other chaosworlds, and each of them gave birth to as many geniuses as an entire

territory might,” the bald old man said.

Ning was starting to understand. No wonder the Pangu Chaosworld and Seamless Chaosworld had so many freakishly talented people! They didn’t have any good techniques or legacies, but they were still so talented that they were able to fight at a higher level of power than they were at. Once they were given good techniques, they skyrocketed in power.

“Later on, these two chaosworlds collided against each other. Their Worldhearts smashed together as well, and parts of their Worldhearts were actually broken off and splintered,” the bald old man said. “The shattered Worldheart bits were completely melted away and their power was dispersed upon the countless living beings of the new world.”

Chapter 4: A Graceful Departure

Ji Ning immediately remembered that the Worldheart of the Three Realms was indeed composed of two damaged crystals that had somehow managed to fuse together. Both were indeed incomplete, but they had managed to come together and form a perfect whole.

“In other words... small parts of an Autarch’s godgems were completely dispersed into energy which was bestowed upon the living beings of that era. That was why all of the living beings in that first era underwent certain changes,” the bald old man said. “This was why the woman known as ‘Nuwa’ was able to suddenly break through to become a World God during that war. She had no techniques and no teachers, but she was still able to break through! The one known as Windfiend was also dramatically strengthened during the course of that battle!”

“All living creatures below the World-level in that chaosworld were blessed by the Autarch’s energies,” the bald old man said. “This was why your master Subhuti, as well as many of those other major powers, continued to slowly grow more and more powerful. Their potential continued to deepen as well.”

“As for the countless ordinary mortals of the Three Realms, all of them possess tremendous talent. You used to be nothing more than an ordinary mortal. Back then, the amount of karmic luck you had was vastly inferior to the amount your master Subhuti and the others had.”

“Eventually, you rose to sudden prominence! As your power skyrocketed, you gained more karmic luck and thus many of the blessings of the Three Realms became focused upon you. During that battle against the Seamless Alliance, you finally broke through to a new level of power, draining away a large amount of karmic luck from the Three Realms.” The bald old man looked at Ning. “You were blessed with tremendous potential, becoming the most powerful figure of the Three Realms Era.”

“However... in the end, karmic luck is secondary. It was primarily your own hard work which brought you to this point,” the bald old man said.

Ning was beginning to slowly understand. He had indeed been blessed by luck, which was why he was able to make it this far... but every single powerful cultivator had his own lucky encounters! Take Archon Silksnow as an example. Although he was a fiendish figure, he had also experienced many lucky encounters in his life... but in the end, he had still been forced by Ning to commit suicide.

The more powerful you became, the less of an impact the prime essences of the Chaosverse would have upon you. There were evil figures who had butchered entire territories, but they were still living happy lives, yes? The prime essences of the Chaosverse weren't able to do anything to them.

"The Three Realms Era ended, and the new Three Realms began. By now, the Worldheart is in good shape. There are no longer any godgem fragments, and so it is impossible for the generations to come in the new Three Realms to be quite as monstrously talented as the generation of the Three Realms Era." The bald old man laughed. "Your era was a special one which gave birth to special figures. If you missed it, you missed it."

Ning nodded. That era was an era where two Autarch's godgems had collided and given birth to a brand new world. It had indeed given birth to many major powers, including over ten thousand World-level cultivators and numerous Samsara Daolords, with Ning himself being the strongest of them. But of course, the vast majority of the living beings continued to live and die in an unending cycle of life and death.

"Every single living being born from a chaosworld formed by an Autarch's godgem is unique," the bald old man said. "This is because they all have a tiny amount of the Autarch's own essence within them. Once their souls and truesouls are destroyed, their truesoul fragments will be immediately taken away by the prime essences of the Chaosverse and hidden within its depths."

"You must understand, long long ago the vast Chaosverse didn't have that many living beings within it. It was the prime essences themselves who gave birth to all things. However... after doing so, as the living creatures grew stronger the prime essences themselves grew weaker."

“This is because, when we cultivate and grow stronger, what we do is draw upon the energy of the prime essences of the Chaosverse,” the old man explained. “And when an Autarch rises to power? This is an incredible event. The rise of every single Autarch is a momentous occasion for the prime essences of the Chaosverse. Once an Autarch dies, the prime essences will immediately do their best to absorb as much of the Autarch’s power as possible.

“Thus, although it is very easy to revive a living being from an ordinary chaosworld, to revive a living being from a chaosworld formed by an Autarch’s godgem is far more difficult. The problem facing us is that the Three Realms Era was an era where the living beings were blessed with the energies of TWO fragmented godgems. Every single living being of that era is incredibly special.

“Your Dao-companion was a Celestial Immortal of that era. To revive her truly will be even more difficult than reviving a Hegemon!” the bald old man said. “The prime essences have already swallowed her truesoul fragments; there’s no way they will spit it back out again. They will never agree to release your Dao-companion’s truesoul fragments. They’ll use their full power to oppose anyone who tries.”

Ning now completely understood. He was a major power himself, and he had seen the countless techniques of two mighty civilizations. He knew far more than the vast majority of Hegemons.

When living beings were born, they would draw upon the energy of the primordial chaos to grow more powerful. If this process continued unabated, giving birth to more and more powerful experts... where would all of that energy come from? From the Chaosverse itself! Thus, the Chaosverse needed to reclaim its energies as well, and one of the most basic ways to do that was to draw upon truesoul fragments. The so-called destruction of the truesoul was nothing more than completely shattering a truesoul into fragments which would then be swallowed up by the Chaosverse.

It was akin to the cycle of reincarnation. New experts would rise to power, while dead ones would see their truesouls swallowed up by the

Chaosverse. It formed a complete cycle.

Everworlds had their own basic essences, which was why when living beings died in an everworld their truesoul fragments would remain within the everworld. Reviving them would be quite easy.

Individuals who lived in otherverses would see their truesouls remain within the otherverse when they died. For example, the ‘Sword Hegemon’ who was the big brother of the Paragon of Pills – when he died, his truesoul was taken away by the prime essences of that alternate universe. To revive him would be comparatively easier, but he was still a Hegemon; the prime essences of that otherverse would fight tooth-and-claw to keep his truesoul fragments. Only an Autarch would be able to bring him back, but an Autarch would not casually revive a Hegemon. The price for such a thing would be far more than a mere realmship.

Chaosworlds were the most problematic! Alas, Yu Wei was a Celestial Immortal who had been born and died within a chaosworld birthed by one of Autarch Awakener’s godgems.

“There’s nothing I can do.” The bald old man looked at Ning, then waved his hand and tossed the realmship back to Ning. “I wasn’t able to carry out your request. Here’s your realmship.”

“If not even an Autarch can accomplish this, who can?” Ning was rather frantic.

“Hmph! If an Autarch can’t do it, no one can. Duh!” The bald old man let out a laugh, but then he suddenly noticed the look on Ning’s face. He instantly understood that reviving this woman had been this talented Daolord’s strongest desire, and he couldn’t help but let out a sigh. “It is just too difficult. If even I would risk my life in the attempt but still probably fail... who else could possibly succeed?”

Ning was rather dazed.

“Ehhh...” the bald old man looked at Ning, then suddenly laughed. “There IS one possibility.”

Ning’s eyes lit up as he immediately stared at Autarch Titanos.

“All of us Autarchs were originally Hegemons who broke through to the next step and became Autarchs.” The bald old man looked at Ning. “You, however, train in an Omega Dao. If you can succeed in the Daomerge, you’ll become a completely unprecedeted Eternal Emperor who will vastly outstrip other Hegemons in power! Not even I would dare claim to understand the level of power you would reach.”

“If you can succeed in the Daomerge to gain eternity, then make another breakthrough to reach Autarchy...! An Omega Dao Autarch would probably be far more powerful than the rest of us. I suspect that such a person would be capable of reviving your Dao-companion without any difficulties,” the bald old man said.

Ning was speechless. He now felt a tremendous desire to succeed in the Daomerge and then advance from Eternity to Autarchy.

“Haha, but that’s just a hypothetical possibility. There’s never been anyone to succeed in the Daomerge in an Omega Dao, to say nothing of reaching Autarchy.” The bald old man began to walk away into the void as he spoke. “Foolish child... sometimes, you have to learn when to let go. On the path of cultivation, excessive obsession can sometimes result in self-destruction.” As he spoke, he disappeared into the distance.

Just like that... Autarch Titanos was gone.

Ning stood there, completely unmoving.

“What should we do?” Whitethaw sent mentally to Azurefiend.

“How should I know? Reversing spacetime to revive his Dao-companion was his most ardent desire. Now that he’s lost all hope... who knows what will happen?” Hegemon Azurefiend shook his head. “Autarch Titanos was worried that his Dao-heart would collapse, which was why he gave Darknorth one final glimmer of hope... but Omega Daos are incredibly difficult! Even the Autarch himself stated that there has never been anyone to succeed in the Daomerge for an Omega Dao, much less reach Autarchy with it!”

“He has to first become an Emperor, then become an Autarch. Every step is so difficult as to be completely impossible.” Azurefiend shook his head.

The Hegemons of the various territories and realmverses all dreamed of becoming Autarchs, but it was all for naught.

Ning wished to use his Omega Dao to become an Autarch? Did he think all the other Hegemons were fools who didn't just 'want it enough'? Becoming an Autarch was no easy feat!

"Actually, there's no need for him to waste too much time thinking about this stuff. Right now, the greatest problem facing him is still the Daomerge!" Azurefiend said, "Only if he succeeds in the Daomerge shall he have a future! Tell me, do you think your master will succeed in it?"

Chapter 5: Remorseless Unto Death

“He can,” Whitethaw said solemnly. “I have faith in my master.” He knew that Ji Ning had been blessed with tremendous good fortune within the Azureflower Estate, and also that his master had only been training for an extremely short period of time. Ning had a chance to succeed at the Daomerge.

“Bah, I don’t even know why I’m wasting time talking to a golem like you.” Azurefiend shook his head and turned to stare at the distant Ning. “But of course, I personally hope that he succeeds as well. An Emperor who completed the Daomerge with an Omega Dao... how powerful would he become? I can’t even imagine it. He’d probably be far more powerful than even Otherverse Lords. He might even approach the Autarchs themselves in power!”

The distant Ning suddenly sent a hoarse mental message to them: “Whitethaw, Azurefiend, I wish to be alone for a time. Do not disturb me.”

“Yes, Master,” Whitethaw said.

“Some alone time would do you good. Think things over. Cultivation is a way of life; if your Dao-heart is not resolute enough, you won’t be able to make it far along this path, much less master the Omega Dao,” Azurefiend said.

Ning didn’t respond. He simply strode away into the skies. Rumble... the void around him suddenly began to change. The primordial chaos flexed and trembled as a new world began to be born. Mountains rose, rivers appeared, and an indescribably vast sea took shape as well. Earth appeared, forming continents which were then covered with grasslands and marshes. Even cities and forests began to appear, causing the world to become increasingly beautiful.

Soon, a completely new world had been created around Ning... the world of the Grand Xia.

All it took was a single thought from Ning and the Grand Xia world was quickly remade.

“Stillwater City.” Ning strode through the skies, surrounded by clouds. He stared off into the distance, where a great city had appeared. This was Stillwater City, a place of many memories for Ning. This Stillwater City even had a Black-White College within it.

“The Dao Debate Palace of the Black-White College.” Ning walked into the Black-White College. It was just as it had been in his memories, except there were no living creatures within it at all. He soon reached the Dao Debate Palace. Ning sat down at the entranceway to the Dao Debate Palace, then picked up a gourd of wine and began to drink, his gaze distant as he stared into the palace.

He still remembered what had happened that year. He had been very young and had joined the Black-White College alongside Mu Northson. He had been a dazzling figure, and had defeated many senior apprentice-brothers during the Dao Debates. In the end, it had been Yu Wei who had intervened and defeated him effortlessly. He still remembered what the wager for their fight had been – a hundred black-white pellets and five kilograms of liquid essence.

“A hundred black-white pellets and five kilograms of liquid essence. Senior apprentice-sister, why is it that the path to our reunion is such a difficult one?!” Ning murmured to himself, then raised his head and drank some more wine. He drank too quickly, causing himself to cough. The wine splattered all over him, but he didn’t care. He wanted to give vent to his pain.

He felt a sense of rage and resentment in his heart, a sense of pain which he had suppressed for too long. Why? He had clearly succeeded and had even seen her coming back to life. When they had shared gazes, he had known that everything was going to be perfect. He was about to embrace her again at long last... but in the end, it had been a failure!

Why!?

“I’ll keep walking down this path for as long as I must.” Ning stared into the Dao Debate Palace as he murmured to himself. He felt as though he could see those duels he had fought against Yu Wei and the others.

He had never hesitated, never given up. If the Autarch said that this would only be possible if he completed his Daomerge with his Omega Dao and then became an Autarch... then that would be what Ning's goal would become!

This would be an extremely difficult path to take. Ning wouldn't shirk back from it, but he did understand how low his chances of success were.

"Perhaps I shall one day collapse on this path." Ning smiled. "When I collapse, my truesoul will scatter and then return to the prime essences of the Chaosverse. There, the two of us shall be together once more."

There was still wine left in the gourd, but Ning was already drunk. Not from the wine; from his hopes. Ning rose to his feet and began to walk outside.

Whoooosh. Suddenly, large plumes of snow began to fly through the air. Ning walked through the snow, carrying the wine gourd in one hand while using a Northbow sword to train in sword-arts with the other. It wasn't an intentional display of sword-arts, it was just a way for his spirit to give vent.

All he wanted to do was to remain drunk. He continued to drink while executing his sword-arts. Ning felt himself growing drunker and drunker.

The vague outline of a person appeared before his eyes. It was Yu Wei. She was as beautiful as ever. It felt as though they were meeting again for the first time.

"Overwhelming sorrow from farewells... but it is naught but one parting of many." Ning smiled.

Whoosh. Ning's sword suddenly manifested a blood-colored light that shot out through the skies. He had just unconsciously and naturally executed the thirteenth stance of the [Heartsword], 'Snowland Blood'.

This sense of overwhelming sorrow, of the heart transcending all mortal concerns... when Ning struck out with his sword, he felt as though his sword was his lover. It was different from the eleventh stance, 'Teardrop', or the twelfth stance, 'Swordtide'. Those were frenzied attacks of

overwhelming power. This attack had a sense of melancholy to it, a sense of pain stemming from heartache.

The melancholy had caused him to pour all of his heart into the sword, and thus the thirteenth stance had been mastered.

“Emperor Heartsword... I wonder what sort of mental state you were in when you first created this thirteenth stance of the Heartsword, ‘Snowland Blood’.” Ning smiled as he waved his sword about. “The fourteenth stance of the Heartsword is ‘Remorseless Unto Death’.” Ning raised his head to take another gulp of wine, then let out a loud cry as he struck out with a new, changed streak of sword-light.

When his sword struck out, it became ephemeral and transcendent. It was hard to even see his sword; it was as though the sword itself had vanished. However, a few vague traces could be seen. Those hard-to-see traces were indistinct but completely unblockable. It would continue to advance, and if anyone tried to stand in its path then that person would be slaughtered. The traces of this sword were enough to inspire utter terror in any who saw it.

This was the fourteenth stance of the Heartsword – Remorseless Unto Death.

In the Flamedragon Realmverse, there had only ever been a total of two cultivators who had mastered the fourteenth stance of the [Heartsword] art, including Emperor Heartsword himself. Now, Ning had become the third!

The thirteenth stance of the Heartsword, ‘Snowland Blood’. The fourteenth stance of the Heartsword, ‘Remorseless Unto Death’. These two were on the same general ‘level’. So long as one could learn the thirteenth stance, it wouldn’t take too long for the fourteenth stance to be mastered as well.

Emperor Heartsword’s experiences truly had been remarkable. Although he had different experiences than Ning, they had reached a very similar mental state. Ning felt a similar sense of sorrow and melancholy; he knew that the chances of reversing spacetime and reviving his wife were

impossibly low. And yet... he would have no regrets at all for pursuing this path, even in the face of death! No matter how low the chances were, he would still continue on this path.

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Ning danced with the sword as snow flew around him. Slowly, the skies turned dark. Ning lay down on the snowy ground and went to sleep. It had been a long, long time since he had slumbered.

The 'snow' and the 'darkness'... these were nothing more than reflections of his mental state. He had created this world, and so its weather was invisibly influenced by his state of mind.

He slept for a long period of time before finally reopening his eyes. By now, a morning sun was rising from the horizon, bathing the world with its warm rays of light. There was some fog, but it was unable to block out the sunlight which pierced through everything as it illuminated the world.

Ning glanced at the gourd and the Northbow sword, both of which lay fallen next to him. He smiled, then picked them up.

"I've woken up. The Daomerge, eh?" Ning stared at the distant dawn sun, then murmured to himself: "Then I'll deal with the Daomerge first! I'll take things one step at a time. After the Daomerge, I'll then become an Autarch."

"Senior apprentice-sister... don't blame me if I fail." Ning chuckled, then soared into the skies. Rumble... the Black-White College and the city of Stillwater both began to break apart. The entire Grand Xia began to break apart, quickly dissipating into nothingness.

Ning stared at the two figures waiting for him in the distant void.

"Master," Whitethaw called out respectfully.

"Darknorth." Hegemon Azurefiend was slightly startled. He could sense that Daolord Darknorth seemed to have undergone a tremendous transformation. His very aura had changed. In the past, Ning had a certain radiant dynamism to him. He had been a dazzling figure who was filled with hope... but now, his gaze was much calmer and more distant. It was

like an endlessly deep sea. There was nothing which could shake his heart.

Reversing spacetime to revive Yu Wei had been a failure. All of that was over now, and he only had one thought in his mind... to continue walking his path of cultivation with no remorse and no regrets, unto death itself.

Either he would succeed in reuniting with Yu Wei, or he would fail and die, reuniting with her in the prime essences of the Chaosverse.

“Azurefiend, do you think I’ll succeed in the Daomerge?” Ning laughed.

Azurefiend was startled upon seeing Ning’s smile. He immediately said, “It’ll be extremely hard... but then again, the number of people who became Daolords of the Fourth Step via an Omega Dao is minuscule. The fact that they failed doesn’t mean you will fail as well, Darknorth.”

“Just so.” Ning laughed.

“But you are too stubborn and attached. Remember what Autarch Titanos said; excessive obsession can result in self-destruction,” Azurefiend said.

Ning nodded and smiled. “But you know, he left out part of the saying. The full saying is, excessive obsession can result in great accomplishments, but it can also result in self-destruction. I have the feeling... that I’m the type who will have great accomplishments.”

Chapter 6: Icepeak Army

“Haha, I also believe that you’ll accomplish great things!” Azurefiend looked at Ji Ning approvingly. He knew that some cultivators with deep obsessions who suffered setbacks would be so damaged by them that their Dao-hearts could crumble. This wasn’t rare! Even Autarch Titanos had been worried that this dazzlingly talented Daolord would perish out of despair, which was why he voiced that final possibility of using an Omega Dao to become an Autarch. However, everyone knew how remote those chances were.

“I wish to remain in the Three Realms for a period of time,” Ning said. “After I have fully mastered those formations, I’ll return to the Jadefire Realm.” The Flamewing God was in a state of slumber; to such a creature, a nap lasting one or two chaos cycles was nothing special at all. In the end, Ning would have to rely on his Primaltwin in the Azureflower Estate to unlock those formations.

“As you desire,” Azurefiend smiled. “I’m going to spend some time wandering your homeland as well. It has been quite some time since I’ve experienced the mortal life.”

Ning nodded. “Remember, you are not permitted to kill.”

“Then what if someone tries to bully me?” Azurefiend stared.

“Capture them first. You can kill them if I give the nod,” Ning said. He refused to allow a Hegemon to run wild within his homeland.

“Fine. As you insist.” Azurefiend felt quite helpless. As a retainer, he had to obey orders.

Ning chuckled, then began to walk towards the ‘Three Realms Domain’ with Whitethaw behind him. The Three Realms Domain referred to the region of 3900 chaosworlds which had been established by Ning, Subhuti, Windfiend, and the other major powers.

“How beautiful.” Ning stared at the thousands of chaosworlds that were organized into that enormous triangular formation. They were like a host

of flickering stars in the sky, glowing with dazzling light. Ning nodded slowly. “Later, it’ll be time to further perfect this formation.” Stabilizing the Three Realms Domain was a long-term endeavor.

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A territory that was extremely far away from the Flamedragon Realmverse.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. An endless black fog had spread out to cover a deep chasm, and at the bottom of the chasm was the residence of a famed Otherverse Lord known as ‘Lord Skyjade’.

Swoosh. Swoosh. An enormous tear in space appeared above the abyss, with three towering figures exiting the tear.

They were all onyx humanoids with icy expressions on their faces. Unlike ‘ordinary’ humanoids, their bodies were covered with strange silver-white diagrams. Just standing in the air above the abyss, they emanated an endless aura of cold that swept out and caused even the endless black mist below them to freeze over.

“We finally arrived.” The three onyx humanoids all smiled slightly.

“Lord Skyjade, come out and meet with us,” one of the onyx humanoids called out loudly. His voice boomed out, echoing into the abyss deep within them.

Swoosh. A man dressed in dark golden robes walked out from the abyss, emanating an aura of endless might which suppressed the freezing cold. Lord Skyjade had handsome features and an extraordinary aura. He was the master of this realmverse and a nearby otherverse, making him far superior to ordinary Otherverse Lords.

“Hmph. Why have you sought me out?” Lord Skyjade’s voice held a tinge of distaste, but he managed to suppress much of his anger as he spoke.

“What’s wrong, Lord Skyjade? Do you detest the Icepeak Army?” one of the onyx humanoids mocked.

“If you don’t wish to speak with us and wish to put on airs in front of us,

we can have our general, 'Lord Wulf', come and speak to you instead," another onyx humanoid said.

Lord Skyjade frowned. He did feel a great deal of trepidation when dealing with the legendary Icepeak Army. "Cut the crap. What do you want, exactly?"

"While the three of us were out adventuring, we suddenly heard word of a distance place known as the Flamedragon Realmverse. Supposedly, an incredibly talented Daolord has managed to procure a realmship. Alas... as you might know, our Icepeak Army is extremely powerful and has multiple realmships, but our general Lord Wulf doesn't have one despite his incredible power. Now, a Daolord does. Isn't this quite irritating? Thus, we are planning to head to the Flamedragon Realmverse and force that Daolord to hand the realmship over," a skinny onyx humanoid said.

"I heard that the Icepeak Army has a total of five realmships, while your general Lord Wulf is incredibly strong. Why doesn't he have a realmship to call his own?" Lord Skyjade feigned surprise.

"Hmph." The three onyx humanoids snorted, not wanting to explain. Clearly, even the mighty Icepeak Army had its own internal squabbles.

"Lord Skyjade, we've come here to ask you to help send us to the Flamedragon Realmverse," a muscular onyx humanoid said. "The Flamedragon Realmverse is too far away. It would take us far longer than tens of millions of chaos cycles to reach it if we were to fly towards it. Daolords have short lives; we don't have the time to waste."

"The Flamedragon Realmverse? I don't have a realmship." Lord Skyjade shook his head. "Are you actually expecting me to use up the energy of my otherverse to send you there?"

"We'll compensate you appropriately, Lord Skyjade," the cyclopean onyx humanoid said. Although they were extraordinary figures of great power, they still had to show a basic level of courtesy to an Otherverse Lord.

"You wish for me to take you all the way to the distant Flamedragon Realmverse? That's far too exhausting." Lord Skyjade shook his head. "How about this? I'll ask one of my friends who has a realmship to help

you out and take you to the Flamedragon Realmverse, but of course you'll have to compensate him as well."

"Naturally."

"Understood," the three onyx humanoids said.

Lord Skyjade remained quite displeased. He was an exalted Otherverse Lord; normal Hegemons had to treat him with great respect. These three were nothing more than minor soldiers in the Icepeak Army, yet they dared to behave so insolently towards him!

Alas, when he thought of the supreme leader of the Icepeak Army, that towering figure seated upon that mighty throne, Lord Skyjade couldn't help but shudder. He couldn't help but let out a sigh for Daolord Darknorth, who he had never met. "A minor Daolord was able to convince a Hegemon to become his retainer. News has spread throughout the Chaosverse. Even the Icepeak Army has heard of him."

"Remember, that place is under the sway of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance. That is Realmslord Windgrace's territory," Lord Skyjade said. "Realmslord Windgrace's 'Blacksun' is not easy to deal with."

There were differences in status amongst Otherverse Lords as well. Realmslord Windgrace, as the master of the Blacksun, was definitely a terrifying figure even amongst Otherverse Lords.

"We know. We're only there for Daolord Darknorth, not to cause a war. I don't think Realmslord Windgrace would choose to make an enemy out of the Icepeak Army for such a matter," the three onyx humanoids said.

"Fine. Wait a while. Roughly a hundred thousand years from now, my friend shall arrive and take you towards the Flamedragon Realmverse." Lord Skyjade turned and flew back into the deep abyss.

The three watched him leave. "Hmph. Lord Skyjade is quite a prideful figure."

"The three of us are Black Emperors. If we worked together, he wouldn't be able to do anything to us even though he is an Otherverse Lord. The only reason he dares to behave so arrogantly before the Icepeak Army is

because he can hide within his otherverse whenever he pleases.” All three of them were rather disdainful towards him.

“Oh, right. Realmslord Windgrace of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance is not a man to be trifled with. This won’t be a problem, will it?” the muscular onyx humanoid frowned as he spoke.

“Don’t worry! Old man Windgrace is a clever fellow. He wouldn’t dare launch an actual war against the Icepeak Army. He’s all by himself, while we have an entire host of Hegemons on our side, as well as his Majesty! Hmph. So long as we don’t go too far and merely act against that Daolord, this won’t cause too much of a stir. Realmslord Windgrace knows his limits.”

“Agreed.”

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Time flowed on. In the blink of an eye, ten million years had gone by, and a realmship finally reached the Flamedragon Realmverse.

“Thank you, Hegemon Thunderstar. Wait for us here, just in case... but we don’t think a mere Daolord would dare to go against our will. He’ll probably hand the realmship over to us, and so we’ll probably just fly back in the realmship without needing to trouble you again.” The three onyx humanoids flew towards the Flamedragon Realmverse.

Hegemon Thunderstar had become a Hegemon via the Dao of Lightning. He was terrifyingly fast and an extremely famous figure.

“Emperors will bide their time, but Daolords are different. They have such short lives that they are usually quite temperamental,” Hegemon Thunderstar said with a laugh. “Given that he has Hegemon Azurefiend as a retainer... if he really does fight back and chooses to hide within Hegemon Azurefiend’s estate-world, you won’t necessarily be able to win the realmship from him.”

“We trust he wouldn’t dare to make enemies out of us.” The three onyx humanoids were quite confident in their chances. As for Hegemon Thunderstar, he secretly smirked.

The vast majority of the supreme powers of the Chaosverse all disliked the Icepeak Army! It was, however, an extremely formidable force, and so even Otherverse Lords were forced to give way before them.

Chapter 7: The Lonely King

The Flamedragon Realmverse. Vastheaven Territory. Within the Vastheaven Everworld.

Whoooosh. An enormous tear in space appeared, with three towering onyx humanoids emerging from within it. Each of them radiated auras of tremendous power that showed them to be at the Hegemon level.

“That is Vastheaven Palace,” one of the onyx humanoids said.

“Thankfully, Hegemon Winterflame has long ago spread word regarding Daolord Darknorth. Otherwise, we wouldn’t have been able to acquire such detailed information regarding him with such ease,” the skinny onyx humanoid said with a laugh.

“I hear that Hegemon Winterflame remains trapped within the Jadefire Realm.”

“That’s why he hates Daolord Darknorth so much. However... the Jadefire Realm truly is a terrifying place. Not even the three of us would dare to barge into it; only the general himself would dare to do such a thing! However, I trust Daolord Darknorth will be wise enough not to fight us head-on.” The three onyx humanoids flew through the skies towards Vastheaven Palace.

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Within Vastheaven Palace.

Daolord Pillsaint was working on his alchemy, while Su Youji, Ji Ning, and Solesky were both watching.

“I can smell the fragrance of the pill,” Su Youji said eagerly.

Crack. Sizzle. Pop. The flames continued to sizzle away at the alchemy pot as Pillsaint focused all of his efforts on controlling the fire.

“Not bad.” The nearby Ning nodded. “Pillsaint is getting to be increasingly impressive in the Dao of Alchemy. He can now be considered a legendary grandmaster in alchemy in the Endless Territories. I have to

admit, I'm far from being a match for him."

"Master, that's because you didn't put any effort into alchemy," Su Youji immediately rebutted. In her mind, Ning was the most talented in every aspect.

In truth, Ning was at such a high level of enlightenment with regards to the Dao that he had reached incredible heights in both the Dao of Formations and the Dao of Fire. In truth, he was better at controlling the alchemical flame than Pillsaint, but he lacked experience with regards to understanding how the medicinal properties of the various materials were mixed together. This required countless trials and experience.

Boom! Suddenly, a terrifying wave of power swept across the area. Bang! Startled by this, Pillsaint lost control over the fire, causing the alchemy pot to explode and the pill within to be destroyed.

"What's going on?" Su Youji and Emperor Solesky both stared towards the outside, stunned.

"Such power... a Hegemon's aura? Since when did Hegemons become this commonplace?" Ning frowned. Hegemons were extremely rare; they were supreme within their realmverses. For Hegemon Winterflame to attack was one thing; it had only been a few dozen chaos cycles, but yet another Hegemon had come. Judging from the way the Hegemon had flared his aura, he clearly had come with bad intentions.

"Let's go take a look." Ning remained quite calm. With a swoosh, he flew into the skies with Emperor Solesky flying right behind him.

The two flew into the air of Vastheaven Palace and stared outside. Ning's face immediately turned solemn. There were three towering figures standing in the air... and their bodies were not of cultivators but the onyx humanoids he had encountered in the past. There were three of them! However, they were different from the Sithe onyx humanoids which Ning had encountered in the past. These three onyx humanoids were all covered with silver diagrams and emanated an aura of endless cold.

"Black Emperors of the Sithe?" Ning was shocked. "Three of them?" Black Emperors were terrifyingly strong. Their bodies were much tougher

than the bodies of most Hegemons, which was why they had an advantage in combat. In the cave which Ning and Ninedust had visited all those years ago, they had found a Black Emperor who had perished in battle while taking two Hegemons with it.

“You are Darknorth?” the skinny onyx humanoid said.

“Yes I am,” Ning said. “Dare I ask why the three of you have come to Vastheaven Palace?”

“Haha, we’ve come to visit you on business, of course. Why else would we come all the way here to the Flamedragon Realmverse?” the muscular onyx humanoid said with a snicker.

“Darknorth, I hear you have a realmship,” the skinny onyx humanoid said.

Ning’s heart trembled. As he had suspected, this was about his realmship. Realmships were simply of tremendous interest to Hegemons, but he never would’ve expected them to attract three Black Emperors. Still... he hadn’t feared even an entire host of Hegemons from the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance. Why would he fear these three onyx humanoids?

“So what if I do? So what if I don’t?” Ning asked.

“You dare act with such arrogance to our face? Quite bold.” A cold light flashed through the skinny onyx humanoid’s eyes. “Hmph. If you do have it, hand it over and we’ll spare your life. If you don’t have it... then you are useless to us and shall die right now.”

“Hand over the realmship,” the cyclopean onyx humanoid commanded coldly.

“If you don’t hand it over, everyone connected to you will perish.”

Riiiiip. A tear in space appeared off in the distance. The three onyx humanoids all turned to look, only to see an ancient realmship fly out of the tear.

“The realmship.” They immediately revealed looks of delight.

“Haha, the kid’s pretty straightforward.”

“Not bad, not bad. You are a smart boy. Hand over the realmship and you can all survive.”

“Give us the realmship.” The three onyx humanoids nodded approvingly at this. They had acquired quite a bit of intelligence regarding Ning and knew that he wasn’t easy to deal with. If Daolord Darknorth had chosen to remain hidden within the Jadefire Realm, there would’ve been nothing they could do; their only option would’ve been to ask their general, Lord Wulf, to intervene. But if they did that, they wouldn’t have rendered any real merits to the organization.

Given that this Daolord had Hegemon Azurefiend by his side, if he wanted to flee and hide there really wouldn’t have been much they could do to him. If Ning was willing to hand it over, though, they would be so magnanimous as to spare his life.

Whoosh. A white-robed youth, an honest-looking white-furred golem, and a shriveled-up old man emerged from the realmship.

Ning’s avatar and Emperor Solesky’s avatar both retreated for now.

“And who are the three of you?” Ning asked. “Why have you immediately demanded my realmship?”

“The three of us are soldiers from the Icepeak Army,” the skinnier black humanoid said calmly. “While wandering through the various realmverses, we heard word of you and so came here as quickly as possible. We wish to take your realmship and offer it to our general, ‘Lord Wulf’. Kid, as a Daolord you will only live a short period of time. You probably haven’t even finished exploring the Flamedragon Realmverse. This realmship will be of little use to you. Hand it over to us, and you’ll have avoided calamity.”

“The Icepeak Army?” Ning frowned.

“It really is the Icepeak Army.” Hegemon Azurefiend’s face tightened slightly.

“Azurefiend, you’ve heard of the Icepeak Army before?” Ning sent mentally.

“Darknorth, as you might know, when we defeated the Sithe during the Dawn War the Sithe left behind many treasures which ended up falling into our hands,” Hegemon Azurefiend sent mentally. Ning just continued to listen.

“Some of the most powerful Sithe weapons of war, such as the ‘Blacksun’, ended up in the hands of people like Realmslord Windgrace. That is why Realmslord Windgrace is so famous and has such a higher status than other Otherverse Lords. Not even the Icepeak Army would go cause problems for him.”

“The leader of the Icepeak Army is generally referred to respectfully as the ‘Lonely King’. He was born an Ancient cultivator and has an eccentric personality. He always has a cold look on his face, and he delights in slaughter! It is said that he only ever smiles when he kills. The Lonely King once acquired a Sithe treasury which was filled with Sithe war machines and weapons. He is personally in control of the most powerful war machines, but he also acquired four ‘Golden Emperors’ and sixty-nine ‘Black Emperors’. He used one of them to undergo the Ritual Sacrificium to become a Golden Emperor, while allowing three Hegemons who joined him to do the same! Over the course of countless years, he allowed some of his Eternal Emperors to be transformed into Black Emperors. As a result, he now has a terrifyingly powerful army under his control, with him at the lead. This army is named the Icepeak Army.”

“Although the name sounds rather ordinary, it is legendary for its savagery. It will battle to the death anyone who offends the Lonely King! They’ve caused many great wars and have even destroyed an otherverse, causing three Otherverse Lords to die by their hands. But of course, they suffered certain losses during those wars as well. Supposedly, they now only have sixty-one Black Emperors left.”

Ning was stunned upon hearing this. Even three Otherverse Lords had died by their hands? “Aren’t Otherverse Lords able to hide within their alternate universes?” Ning couldn’t help but ask, “Doesn’t that mean they had to destroy the entire alternate universe?”

“There are two supremely powerful war machines publicly

acknowledged to be under the Lonely King's control. One of them can be instantly activated, which was why two of the Otherverse Lords were slain before they even had a chance to run," Azurefiend sent mentally. "The third managed to hide within his otherverse, but the enraged Lonely King continued his pursuit into the otherverse. No one knows what exactly happened inside it, but the end result was that the otherverse was completely destroyed and the Otherverse Lord died. It was that battle which truly allowed the Lonely King to rise to fame and for the Icepeak Army to become known as one of the most terrifyingly powerful organizations in the Chaosverse."

Chapter 8: Ji Ning Battles Black Emperors

“An Otherverse Lord had escaped into his otherverse, yet had still been killed and his entire otherverse had been destroyed.” Azurefiend sent a mental sigh: “That is why everyone suspects that in addition to the two war machines the Lonely King has made public, he should also have a third Sithe war machine of incredible power. Thus, Darknorth... I really do urge you to reconsider how you wish to treat the Icepeak Army. They aren’t easy to deal with. I’m a solitary wanderer who doesn’t have that many treasures, and so the Icepeak Army won’t expend too much resources on hunting me down... but you, Darknorth, have a realmship. The Icepeak Army isn’t going to just give up.”

Azurefiend was quite a proud man, but he felt that Ji Ning had to consider what was best for his sect and his homeland.

“Azurefiend, aside from the Lonely King, do the other three Golden Emperors of the Icepeak Army have especially powerful war machines?” Ning asked.

“They do not.” Azurefiend’s response was quite succinct. “The Icepeak Army has caused quite a few wars, but I’ve never heard of the three Golden Emperors employing any war machines of repute.”

Ning let out a sigh secretly. Given how exalted the Lonely King was, he wouldn’t go so far as to act against a Daolord for the sake of a mere realmship.

“Oh, right. The Flamewing God vs the Lonely King... which should be stronger?” Ning asked mentally. He had his own thoughts, but Azurefiend had been alive for much longer and had seen many things.

“Hard to say who is stronger. Flamewing is just a bit too dumb. It was born with tremendous vitality and has a virtually indestructible body, but Otherverse Lords should be able to stay alive against him,” Azurefiend said. “The Lonely King, however, is different; he’s able to use war machines and is thus a greater threat.”

“What if Flamewing fights the Lonely King?” Ning asked mentally.

“Flamewing won’t be able to kill the Lonely King, but there’s no way the Lonely King would be able to kill Flamewing. I’ve been alive for an extremely long period of time, but I’ve never heard of any major power who was capable of subduing a Chaos Primordial, save for the Autarchs themselves. Kill one? Impossible,” Azurefiend sent mentally. “Darknorth, as you know, the most powerful members of the Sithe race were their Exalts, and it took three of them in order to capture Flamewing... and it remained completely unharmed. Amongst cultivators, everyone knows that only Autarchs are capable of killing Chaos Primordials!”

“Good to know.” Ning came to a decision. Based on the information he had, he also felt confident that no one save for an Autarch would be able to kill Flamewing. Perhaps the Sithe during their glory days were capable of capturing Chaos Primordials when they sent out their most powerful members, and perhaps they might even be able to kill Chaos Primordials via their unique technology... but the Sithe were dust. Although the Lonely King was terrifyingly strong, he had merely gained access to a single war machine treasury the Sithe had left behind.

“What do you plan to do?” Azurefiend sent back.

“Azurefiend, will you be frightened if I refuse them?” Ning sent mentally.

Azurefiend glanced at Ning, rather surprised. “I’m a solitary Hegemon who wanders alone. What do I have to be afraid of? Have you really decided?”

“Yes. I’m confident in my chances.” Ning nodded.

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The three onyx humanoids simply stood there and waited as Ning and Hegemon Azurefiend spoke mentally to each other. They were in no rush. They could tell that Darknorth and Azurefiend were discussing this matter. They felt that once this weak Daolord learned the truth of the Icepeak Army’s might, he would make the wise choice.

“So do you know a bit more about the Icepeak Army now?” the skinny onyx humanoid looked at Ning.

“I’m a Daolord who is unlearned compared to my Hegemonic peers. I’ve only heard of you for the first time today. Impressive, truly impressive,” Ning said.

“Cut the crap.” The cyclopean onyx humanoid was growing a bit impatient. Frowning, he barked out, “Hurry up and hand over the realmship. Otherwise, we’re going to attack. When that happens, both you and your sect shall both perish.” He had long ago grown accustomed to acting as he pleased. He had originally been a fairly powerful Eternal Emperor, and after he underwent the Ritual Sacrificium to become a member of the Icepeak Army he had received deference from even Hegemons and Otherverse Lords, all of whom feared the Icepeak Army’s reputation.

Originally, his greatest worry was that this Daolord would cause trouble due to the Daolord’s ignorance of the Icepeak Army’s might. That was why he had held back. But now? Now, he was naturally going to press hard.

Ning stood there, flanked by Azurefiend and Whitethaw. “I don’t wish to make an enemy out of the Icepeak Army, and I’m not qualified to do that either. However, realmships are incredibly precious. You wish for me to simply hand it over for nothing? I might be a mere Daolord, but I have my pride.” Ning smiled. “I have a simple, mutually beneficial solution which will result in me handing over the realmship willingly.”

“A mutually beneficial solution?”

“Speak.” The three onyx humanoids were rather irritated. The Icepeak Army was so incredibly famous that even Hegemons were terrified of them. Only a few solitary Hegemons who wandered alone would dare act so arrogantly before them.

“Simple. The Icepeak Army can buy the realmship from me,” Ning said.

“Buy?” The three onyx humanoids exchanged a glance. “Very well. This estate-world of mine has quite a few treasures inside. I’ll give it to you in exchange for the realmship.” The skinny onyx humanoid casually handed over a golden palm-sized disc which was actually an estate-treasure. The two onyx humanoids were quite calm as well; they felt certain that this

Daolord simply wanted a way to save face. It didn't really matter if they tossed out a few treasures.

Ning shook his head. "The value has to be on par with the realmship."

"On par?" Finally, the looks on the faces of the three onyx humanoids changed. For the first time, they began to realize that this Daolord wasn't looking for a way to save face; he was going to be a tough nut to crack! Realmships were incredibly valuable; not even treasures like Crimsonwave Temple were even close in value to a realmship. Even if the three onyx humanoids pooled all of their treasures together, they still wouldn't be able to afford one. Most likely, their general Lord Wulf would have to trade all of his treasures to just barely afford a realmship.

Trade for something of equivalent value? This would be a fairly good deal if it was between two figures who were on par with each other, such as the Lonely King and Realmslord Windgrace. This was because generally speaking people were completely unwilling to sell realmships; to merely ask for treasures of equivalent value was already a good bargain.

However... Realmslord Windgrace was in command of the Blacksun. He was on the same level as the Lonely King. How was it that a mere Daolord dared to demand treasures of equivalent value?

"Are you looking to die?" the skinny onyx humanoid's eyes flashed with cold light.

"I've already taken a step back and given face. If you accept, we'll carry out the trade. If you refuse? I can't just hand over my realmship for nothing." Ning's own aura began to sharpen as well.

"You...!" The three onyx humanoids stared at the Daolord before them, stunned. He actually was going to face them head-on?

"He's courting death."

"Kill him." The cyclopean onyx humanoid was the first to attack. He instantly transformed into a streak of light who shot towards Ning. He struck out with his right hand, sending it piercing towards Ning like a long spear, with his fingernails being the tip! Black Emperors all had incredibly

powerful bodies; every single part of them was like a weapon.

The arm-spear pierced straight through the void, so powerful as to cause Ning's eyebrows to rise slightly. "Hmph." Whitethaw, by Ning's side, let out an angry snort and immediately charged forwards. While charging, he transformed into an enormous white cloth that swept out towards his foe.

"A mere golem seeks to block me?" The cyclopean onyx humanoid felt some disdain. He was at the Hegemon level of power! Although his insights into the Dao were a bit inferior to true Hegemons, his Black Emperor body gave him tremendous power and allowed him to match Hegemons in battle. His body was so incredibly tough and resilient that in a real battle of life and death, he actually had an advantage.

Bang! This terrifying Hegemonic strike stabbed straight into the enormous white cloth, but the white cloth was incredibly resilient and dispersed all of the attacking energy.

"What?!" The cyclopean onyx humanoid was shocked. The golem had actually blocked his attack?

"Kill them all."

"Kill them and take the realmship." The two other onyx humanoids began to attack as well. Whoosh! Whoosh! Both moved with incredible speed. Although Whitethaw had blocked one of them, that was already his limit; there was no way he could block the other two.

"Hahaha..." Azurefiend laughed loudly as he transformed into his bestial form. His entire body became covered with azure scales, and his head became triangular in shape. His scale-covered tail waved menacingly like a whip, and his entire body glimmered with dark light. He let out a furious howl as he charged through the air, moving to engage.

"The Daolord actually isn't hiding in Hegemon Azurefiend's estate-world." The skinny onyx humanoid was delighted by this and sent mentally, "I'll tie down Azurefiend. You go kill the Daolord."

"Alright." The muscular onyx humanoid was delighted as well. Neither of them had imagined that the Daolord wouldn't go into hiding.

Chapter 9: A Tough Nut

The skinny onyx humanoid was skilled with the saber, but for the sake of tying down Azurefiend he didn't use any weapons at all. He used his bare hands, and since every part of his body was akin to a weapon he was able to tie down Azurefiend as best he could.

Whoosh. He sent his right palm out, his arm stretching to become more than ten thousand kilometers long.

Whap! Azurefiend, in his true form, struck out with his tail against the incoming black palm.

Crack! The vast black arm suddenly changed directions, lashing out in a strange whip-like manner as the arm seemed to transform into an arc that built up power and then struck out once more. The skinny onyx humanoid's entire body seemed to have transformed into a bow-like shape.

"This Black Emperor really is tough to deal with." Hegemon Azurefiend had a complete advantage in power, and was significantly superior to his opponent in terms of insights into the Dao, but his attacks were doing absolutely nothing when being landed upon the Black Emperor's body. This allowed the Black Emperor to continuously tie him down.

"Darknorth has chosen to fight the other Black Emperor by himself. He should be able to keep himself safe, right?" Azurefiend cast a sideways glance at the distant Ning as he battled. A look of shock suddenly appeared on his face.

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"Puny Daolord, you truly are arrogant. However, your arrogance has given us a chance to deal with you. Otherwise, we'd probably have to massacre everyone here to coerce you into complying, starting with all the disciples of Vastheaven Palace. And yet, that might not be enough." The muscular Black Emperor was clearly in a good mood. "Now, we simply have to kill you and we'll have won the realmship."

“You might be celebrating just a bit too early.” Ning stood there in the air, staring calmly at the onyx humanoid before him.

“If you are in such a hurry to die, then die you shall.” The muscular onyx humanoid suddenly struck out with a giant black palm that blotted out the skies as it swept out towards Ning. Whoosh! Ning suddenly moved, disappearing from the onyx humanoid’s field of vision.

“He disappeared?” The muscular onyx humanoid’s palm-strike missed. He immediately struck out in every direction with his palms. As he saw it, even if Ning did vanish he would only be able to hide with his evasion-arts. There was no way he would’ve been able to escape too far.

“I’m over here.” A voice rang out from behind him. The muscular onyx humanoid stared backwards in astonishment, only to see the white-robed youth with the black sheath on his back standing far behind him.

“He’s fast.” A feeling of trepidation appeared within the onyx humanoid’s heart.

“The Black Emperor’s body is a waste on you. Your insights into the Dao are too low. You have some innate advantages in a life-or-death battle, but if I wanted to leave you wouldn’t be able to stop me at all.” Ning slowly shook his head. He suddenly couldn’t help but sigh a bit in his heart. When he had first seen that onyx humanoid’s corpse, he had felt absolutely stunned. He never would’ve imagined that he would have reached that same level of power as well.

In terms of the Dao of the Sword, Ning was on a full level higher than Emperor Heartsword had been. Now that Ning had mastered the fourteenth stance of the [Heartsword] art, he was just a single stance behind Emperor Heartsword, who had created just fifteen stances in total. On the whole, Ning was now far more powerful than Emperor Heartsword. He truly had reached the Hegemon level of combat power.

“Puny Daolord, you are far too arrogant. Die for me!” The muscular onyx humanoid was rather embarrassed and angered as he charged through the air at Ning. Each step he took caused the void around him to shudder as he once more struck out furiously with his giant palms.

Swoosh. Ning moved again. This time, he transformed into a streak of sword-light that dodged hundreds of thousands of kilometers to one side. “You can’t even touch me.” Ning shook his head slowly. This was far too easy.

When he had first relied on his Omega Sword Dao to become a Daolord of the Fourth Step, he hadn’t been this fast. However, it had been more than ten chaos cycles since then. He had reached the Archon level in the Dao of Lightning, giving him an even more terrifying level of speed. He had also reached the Archon level in the Dao of Space, giving him a tremendous amount of skill in manipulating space.

Thus, Ning had now reached a brand new level of speed. Only a Hegemon who was completely focused on speed would be able to catch up to Ning.

“You can’t even capture a Daolord?!” the distant skinny onyx humanoid sent a frantic mental message.

“Puny Daolord!” This time, the muscular onyx humanoid truly was angry and embarrassed. He raised his head, letting out a furious roar. Boom! A thick black fog spread out from him to cover an area of nearly ten million kilometers around him. Everything in this area was mired as if in quicksand, causing Ning’s speed to dramatically lessen.

“Ah, I knew Black Emperors of the Sithe couldn’t possibly be THIS week.” Ning’s body flickered as he transformed into his three-headed, six-armed mode. All six of the Northbow swords flew out from the sheath on his back and into his hands. “Come on.” Ning cracked a smile.

Slash! Slash! Slash! The onyx humanoid struck out with extraordinary strength, delivering one furious palm after another in an effort to slay Ning as quickly as possible. Alas, he had merely reached the Archon level in terms of insights into the Dao. His weaknesses were quite apparent.

Ning was still able to easily maneuver around the onyx humanoid despite the black fog. Ning didn’t even use his own secret arts! Although his speed was lessened, his sword remained incredibly fast.

Slash! Slash! Slash! Ning’s sword-light pierced through the skies, each

streak of sword-light being ephemeral and nigh-invisible. The hints of sword-light were hard to detect, but they carried a terrifying amount of power and seemed capable of chopping through anything which stood in their path. This was a terrifying level of power that came from the combination of the fourteenth stance of the [Heartsword] art and a fourth-stage Daolord's Omega Sword Dao. Each strike was ghostly and unpredictable. The onyx humanoid felt as though the blows were drilling straight through its body.

Slash! Slash! Slash! In the blink of an eye, the two exchanged more than a hundred blows against each other. The onyx humanoid wasn't able to land a single attack against Ning; in short, he was being utterly dominated! However, Ning couldn't help but frown as well: "His body really is incredibly tough. Even when I use my full power, I remain unable to injure him."

"What the hell? He's no Daolord, he's clearly a Hegemon!" The muscular onyx humanoid suddenly pulled away as he shouted furiously, "I can't do anything to him!"

"Go all out and burn your essence. End it quickly!" the skinny onyx humanoid, pressured by Hegemon Azurefiend, sent a frantic mental message.

"You try! I haven't been able to even touch him a single time. His sword-arts are completely flawless. Even if I really did go all out, he could just flee over to Azurefiend." The Black Emperor wasn't willing to go all-out. Unlike normal cultivators, they healed and recovered quite slowly. Once they went all-out, they would be at risk of energy exhaustion. Once they exhausted their energy reserves, their bodies would grow weak and they could even be defeated and then destroyed.

"Withdraw!" The muscular onyx humanoid issued an order to withdraw, and the three quickly rejoined each other.

Azurefiend and Whitethaw moved to stand by Ning's side. The two sides stared at each other from afar.

The three onyx humanoids were all rather angry, but they also felt

stunned. How was it that a Daolord had actually reached such a level of power? He definitely had the power of a Hegemon! Thankfully, the three onyx humanoids all had extremely tough bodies; ordinary Emperors would've been slain with ease by Ning's current level of sword-arts.

"Formidable. I truly do admire you, for a Daolord like yourself to have reached such a level of power." The skinny onyx humanoid stared at Ning. "However... are you absolutely sure that you wish to become an enemy of the Icepeak Army?"

"I do not wish to become an enemy of the Icepeak Army. However, there is no way I'll hand over a realmship for nothing." Ning shook his head.

"Bold. These actions, however, are tantamount to declaring us your enemy!" The skinny onyx humanoid laughed coldly, "I'll give you one more chance! Hand over the realmship. Otherwise, we'll have no choice but to go ahead to report to our superiors that you are being defiant. In the end, the result shall be your death."

Ning just smiled.

"Very well then." They saw the look on Ning's face. The skinny onyx humanoid barked, "Let's go! Next time we come, we'll kill them all."

"Let's go." The three onyx humanoids immediately entered the spatial rift, vanishing without a trace and leaving just Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw behind.

Azurefiend glanced at the white-robed youth by his side. He could sense that Ning had grown tremendously more powerful since their battle in the Jadefire Realm. By now, Ning truly had reached the Hegemon level of power.

"Darknorth, you have now become an enemy of the Icepeak Army," Azurefiend said softly. "The Icepeak Army is not an easy foe to deal with. Given their disposition, they will definitely launch a war against you."

"They aren't easy to deal with, but neither am I." A flicker of killing intent appeared in Ning's eyes.

"You?" Azurefiend was stunned.

“Soon, I’ll have solved the formations and freed Flamewing,” Ning said.

“You are confident in being able to resolve the formations soon?”
Azurefiend was overjoyed.

“More or less. Even if I end up taking longer than I expected, I should be able to buy myself the time needed via the Jadefire Realm. If necessary, I can also run around in the realmship and buy myself some more time,” Ning said. “However... I don’t think we’ll need to go to all that trouble. By the time they come back, the Flamewing God will be waiting for them.”

“Hahaha! If the Flamewing God comes out...” Azurefiend was absolutely overjoyed and excited by this prospect. “You really will be able to do whatever the hell you want. That is a Chaos Primordial! Hahaha! With a Chaos Primordial at your beck and call, who would dare cause trouble for you? If you gave the order, the Chaos Primordial would charge straight into the Icepeak Army’s base and wreck it. The Lonely King would be able to do nothing but stare, dumbstruck, as it happened. There’s nothing he can do to the Flamewing God. Why didn’t you tell me earlier?! I was so afraid that I thought we’d have to go wandering through the cosmos.”

Azurefiend stared at Ning.

“Without Flamewing, I wouldn’t have dared to take such a tough line against them.” Ning smiled as well. “Let’s cut the chit-chat. Starting today, I’m going to put all of my time and effort into solving the formations and breaking them as soon as possible.”

Chapter 10: Lord Wulf

An area at the borders of the Flamedragon Realmverse. Countless bolts of thunder were crackling throughout this region. Suddenly, three onyx humanoids appeared and moved towards that area at high speeds. “Hegemon Thunderstar,” the skinny onyx humanoid called out.

Whoosh. The countless bolts of thunder merged together into a humanoid shape, finally resolving into a violet-robed man. This was Hegemon Thunderstar, who had brought them here via the realmship.

“So do you have the realmship?” Hegemon Thunderstar smiled at them.

The three onyx humanoids had no traces of amusement on their faces. Previously, they had spoken so confidently... but who would've thought that they'd come slinking back in disgrace? They had to once again ask Hegemon Thunderstar to bring them back.

In truth, Hegemon Thunderstar had asked them that question on purpose. He could clearly tell that they didn't have the realmship! He was quite pleased, however, to have the chance to mock a few Black Emperors of the Icepeak Army.

“We do not.” The skinny onyx humanoid said coldly, “Hegemon Thunderstar, your guesses were spot-on. That puny Daolord truly is fearless. He actually dared to defy our will.”

The cyclopean onyx humanoid growled, “Daolord Darknorth is far too arrogant. He actually dares to make an enemy out of the Icepeak Army! I'll definitely report this to the general. Hmph. We ran all the way for nothing. In the end, we'll need to ask the general to personally intervene. He's definitely going to die, and that Vastheaven-whatever will be annihilated as well!”

“We have to make sure that he regrets this.” The muscular onyx humanoid was filled with a killing rage as well.

Hegemon Thunderstar couldn't help but mutter beneath his breath. You failed in your attempts to take it by force, but you still act with such

bravado. The Icepeak Army really did live up to its reputation. Who would've thought that Daolord Darknorth truly was made of such stern stuff?

“Where to next?” Hegemon Thunderstar asked.

“To the general’s residence, Mount Doom,” the skinny onyx humanoid said.

“And where is Mount Doom?” Hegemon Thunderstar was puzzled.

“It is the general’s estate within the Skywolf Realmverse.” The skinny onyx humanoid said rather unhappily, “Hegemon Thunderstar, don’t you know already?”

Hegemon Thunderstar didn’t argue. He truly hadn’t been to the Skywolf Realmverse before, but he had heard that ‘Lord Wulf’s mountain’ was within the Skywolf Realmverse. However, the true name of the place was ‘Mount Doom’; ‘Lord Wulf’s mountain’ was nothing more than a nickname for it.

“Come, I’ll send you over there.” Hegemon Thunderstar waved his hand, causing the realmship to appear.

“We need to travel quickly. We need to report this to the general as soon as possible. Otherwise, I don’t know how I’m going to get this taste out of my mouth,” the muscular onyx humanoid said rather angrily. They had long ago grown accustomed to acting as they pleased. As a result, when they occasionally encountered someone who resisted them they couldn’t help but feel annoyed. In this case, the person in question was a mere Daolord! This made them feel truly insulted.

Alas, the Flamedragon Realmverse was incredibly far away from the Skywolf Realmverse. There was no way for them to contact the Skywolf Realmverse directly! Not even a Daolord’s true body and Primaltwin would be able to sense each other from such a vast difference. One had to at least be an Archon-class Eternal Emperor with an incredibly powerful soul in order for your true body and Primaltwin to be able to sense each other from such a great distance.

Alas, it was far too difficult to convince an Archon-class figure to follow them like a retainer. Most would prefer death to such a life of servitude.

Whoosh. The realmship tore through spacetime, departing at high speeds towards the Skywolf Realmverse.

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18 million years later. Hegemon Thunderstar's realmship had finally reached the Skywolf Territory.

"That over there is Mount Doom." The three Black Emperors stared from afar at the towering mountain that jutted within the void. Looks of delight were on their faces. This was their base.

Mount Doom was completely gray and covered with countless runes and patterns. At the very tip of Mount Doom was an area that glowed with blurry silver light. The silver light illuminated the beautiful palaces below. This was where Lord Wulf resided with his subordinates.

"General."

"General."

"General." The three Black Emperors called out loudly after exiting the realmship, their voices echoing in the air above Mount Doom.

"Ah, Sealaw and the others are back."

"It is brother Sealaw and the others." Figures began to fly out of Mount Doom. All of them were onyx humanoids, their bodies covered with silver diagrams and emanating auras of boundless cold.

Hegemon Thunderstar couldn't help but mutter to himself. They had all been ordinary cultivators, but they had all chosen to undergo the Ritual Sacrificium. They had abandoned their bodies, becoming freakish creatures. Still, he understood that these Black Emperors had originally been fairly mediocre Eternal Emperors. Now that they were Black Emperors, they at least had Hegemonic levels of power.

"What's that? Is that a realmship?"

"Is that our new realmship?" The onyx figures all turned to stare at the

distant realmship. Realmships were incredibly valuable; not even their general, Lord Wulf, had access to one. Hegemon Thunderstar had dared to come here because the three onyx humanoids had long ago sworn lifeblood oaths guaranteeing his security. If they did not, all three of them would die! Hegemon Thunderstar was also certain that he would be able to escape safely.

“Cut the crap. Hurry up and take us to the general! Where is he? There’s something important we need to report to him.”

“What do you need to speak to me about?” A cold voice rang out, followed by a golden figure emerging from the peak of Mount Doom. His entire body seemed to have been composed out of gold, and his body was similarly covered with silver diagrams. The aura emanating from him was so powerful that it vastly outstripped the auras of the Black Emperors serving him. He was one of the legendary Golden Emperors, someone who had undergone the most powerful Ritual Sacrificium the Sithe had to offer.

As for the so-called ‘Exalts’? That level could only be reached through a mixture of cultivation and luck. They were supreme amongst the Sithe and were the most powerful members of the entire race. Hegemons could become transformed into Golden Emperors with ease and ‘manufactured’ in large numbers; there was naturally no way they could be compared to the Exalts. Despite that, Golden Emperors still had a level of power that was comparable to that of Otherverse Lords, and their bodies were even tougher. To destroy their bodies was nearly impossible.

“General.” The three Black Emperors who had just arrived immediately bowed respectfully.

“Speak. You actually rushed over here in a realmship. What is this all about?” Lord Wulf’s gaze was icy-cold. He glanced at the distant realmship, then at his three subordinates.

“General, we were on patrol as ordered,” the skinny onyx humanoid said respectfully, “And we suddenly heard that in the Flamedragon Realmverse, there was a Daolord named Darknorth who somehow managed to take

control over a Sithe site known as the Jadefire Realm. He even managed to convince a Hegemon to serve him as his retainer.”

“A Daolord with a Hegemon as a retainer?” Lord Wulf was quite shocked, as were the Black Emperors by his side. Although this news had spread quite far, it hadn’t quite made it to the Skywolf Territory. These two territories were simply too far away.

“More importantly, Daolord Darknorth actually has a realmship!” The skinny Black Emperor said hurriedly, “The Hegemons of the surrounding territories all wanted to take it from him, but in the end, he actually managed to use the Jadefire Realm to take one of them under his control. Once we heard the news, we immediately travelled to the Flamedragon Realmverse. We wanted to force him to hand it over so that we could offer it to you, General.”

Lord Wulf narrowed his eyes as he continued to listen.

“But... he actually refused!” The skinny Black Emperor gritted his teeth and growled, “He actually dared to refuse! We attacked him, but he was so incredibly powerful that he was at the Hegemonic level of might.”

“A Daolord comparable to Hegemons?” No matter how calm Lord Wulf normally was, he couldn’t help but feel stunned. He nodded slowly. “It seems he must have mastered one of the legendary Omega Daos, and has had some other lucky experiences as well. Hmph... even if he is a Daolord who is comparable to a Hegemon, he is still nothing compared to our Icepeak Army. Are you sure that he dares to make an enemy out of us?”

“Yes.” The skinny Black Emperor nodded, as did the other two. The cyclopean Black Emperor explained, “He holds us in no regard at all. He actually dared to say that he was willing to give us the realmship, but only for treasures of equivalent value.”

“Does he have some sort of special status?” Lord Wulf frowned. “For example, is he an Autarch’s disciple? The Flamedragon Realmverse should be under Realmslord Windgrace’s command. Could it be that he has some sort of connection to Realmslord Windgrace?”

“We haven’t heard of him having any special status. He shouldn’t be

connected to Realmslord Windgrace at all! Previously, he attracted an entire host of Hegemons and Emperors who attempted to kill him and take his realmship, but Realmslord Windgrace didn't intervene. Clearly, there isn't much of a relationship there. In the end, he only survived because he took control over the Jadefire Realm," the skinny Black Emperor said.

"If he doesn't have some sort of special background... no Daolord, no matter how monstrously talented, is anything more than an ant in the face of our Icepeak Army." Lord Wulf swept the three with his icy golden gaze, then turned to stare at the distant realmship. "If my guess is correct, it should be Hegemon Thunderstar in command of that realmship."

"Thunderstar greets you, Lord Wulf." Hegemon Thunderstar flew out of the realmship and bowed.

"I wish to lead my Black Emperors to the Flamedragon Realmverse. I'd like to trouble you to send us over there," Lord Wulf said. "Of course, we'll make it worth your while."

Chapter 11: Chain Weapons

“Helping you make a trip is a minor matter,” Hegemon Thunderstar said. The Hegemons and Emperors of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance had been in a race against time to reach the Flamedragon Realmverse first, which was why they had all been forced to pay exorbitant prices! Going by normal prices, travelling the great distance from the Skywolf Territory to the Flamedragon Realmverse was still going to be quite expensive, but it was nothing to someone like Lord Wulf, who had massacred and looted countless people.

“All Black Emperors, assemble and move out alongside me!” Lord Wulf ordered. “We are going to the Flamedragon Realmverse to take that realmship.”

“Acknowledged!”

“Let’s take that realmship.” A total of nine onyx humanoids flew out from Mount Doom by his side.

Aside from their supreme leader, the Lonely King, the Icepeak Army only had a total of three generals! These three generals each commanded a total of twelve Black Emperors. Normally, they would each have six Black Emperors accompanying them. The other six would be assigned into two squads responsible for patrolling the Chaosverse. Once they heard anything important, they were to immediately come and report it to their general!

The three generals and the Lonely King operated in the same way. They would have part of their soldiers with them, with the rest patrolling the Chaosverse on a long-term basis. This ensured that the Icepeak Army had a strong information network and was able to get involved in any of the momentous events within the Chaosverse on short notice.

This time, Lord Wulf had the three returned patrolling Black Emperors and his six personal Black Emperors with him, making for a total of nine Black Emperors.

“One Golden Emperor and nine Black Emperors. A force like this is

enough to massacre the Flamedragon Realmverse ten times over.” Hegemon Thunderstar mumbled to himself, “All I’m doing is earning a bit of treasure by sending them over. Even if I declined, there would be other Hegemons willing to help out. Daolord Darknorth, you are nothing more than a Daolord but you dare to make an enemy out of the Icepeak Army. I admire you for your courage... but the reason why the other major powers were unwilling to act as you do is because the consequences are too terrifying to bear.”

Hegemon Thunderstar couldn’t help but sigh a bit. He felt as though he could see the end of the line for this genius Daolord. Golden Emperors were all at the Otherverse Lord level of power! Nine Black Emperors working in concert were equivalent in power to an Otherverse Lord as well! How could the Flamedragon Realmverse possibly withstand this level of power?

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The Flamedragon Realmverse remained as calm as always. Ning didn’t make public the fact that he had faced off against three Black Emperors belonging to the Icepeak Army. There was no point. Hegemon Brightshore and the others wouldn’t be of any use, and so it was best not to bother them about it.

The Terror Starsea. The Jadefire Realm.

“Darknorth, it’s been twenty million years. The Icepeak Army could arrive at any moment. How much longer is it going to take for you to break these formations?” The skinny old man, Hegemon Azurefiend, was seated in the lotus position on the deepfire blackstone floor, a frantic look on his face.

“I was just estimating the time earlier!” Ning was standing atop the Flamewing God’s back, focusing his efforts on the black chains in front of him. “I wasn’t exactly sure as to how long it would take for me to break these formations. I thought it would be quite fast, but I ran into a few problems. Don’t be impatient and relax! The Icepeak Army hasn’t even arrived yet. By the time they do arrive at the Jadefire Realm, I’ll first use its

defenses to tie them down for quite some time.”

“This is Lord Wulf we are talking about! He’s supposedly a Golden Emperor with an entire group of Black Emperors serving him. Your flaming passageways won’t be able to withstand a force like his,” Hegemon Azurefiend said hurriedly. “Why don’t we leave the Jadefire Realm for now? Once you’ve fully mastered the formations, we can return here. Otherwise, we’ll be caught here with nowhere to run.”

“Just look at how freaked out you are. You are a Hegemon!” Ning raised his head to glance sideways at Hegemon Azurefiend. “You look scared out of your mind!”

“I’m just trying to be cautious,” Azurefiend immediately rebutted.

“Don’t worry. The flaming passageways might not be able to kill them, but they’ll definitely be able to slow them down.” Ning smiled. “When I’m in the flaming passageways, I’ll be able to travel unimpeded. I can shake them off with ease and escape as I please.”

Ning no longer paid any further attention to Auzrefiend, focusing all of his efforts on the countless formations covering the black chains before him. Although he had memorized them all long ago, when he viewed them in person and saw how the formations changed and flowed, it was still of some help to him.

Time continued to flow on. Azurefiend could do nothing but wait. The feeling that the Icepeak Army was about to arrive at any moment was quite an uncomfortable one. “Actually fighting to the death would be better than just waiting here like this,” Azurefiend muttered.

“Not even my master is as worried as you,” the nearby Whitethaw said.

“You...!” Azurefiend glared at him. “H-he’s completely focused on his formations, while I have nothing to do. Of course I’m going to be miserable!”

“To put it plainly, you are a coward. You are scared.” Whitethaw glanced sideways at Azurefiend.

“Puny golem, how dare you mock me!” Azurefiend glared at him.

Whitethaw just shut his mouth, paying Azurefiend no heed. Azurefiend was so angry that his teeth hurt. Whitethaw only obeyed Ning's orders and didn't seem to care about Azurefiend at all. There really was nothing Azurefiend could do to the golem. He might be able to completely dominate Whitethaw in a fight, but he wasn't able to actually injure Whitethaw.

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Ning's true body and Primaltwin were both consumed with their meditations. Countless formations were flashing through their minds, circulating nonstop and merging together. Some of the formations would then vanish, replaced by other formations.

The art of formations relied heavily upon visualizations and divinations! This was why the Dao of Formations was a legendarily complex one. Anyone capable of becoming a Hegemon via the Dao of Formations would definitely have a far higher level of status than ordinary Hegemons.

Whoosh. The countless formations were tweaked again and again. Suddenly, the black-robed Ning in the Azureflower Estate and the white-robed Ning within the hidden room in the Jadefire Realm both opened their eyes. Their eyes were gleaming with shocking levels of light.

"I understand!" Ning murmured softly, his voice filled with suppressed excitement. "These Sithe elders truly were incredible. They actually managed to use formations in such a manner! Even though I had all those Sithe techniques to serve as references, it still took me an incredibly long period of time to understand and solve these formations." The more Ning researched the Sithe, the more impressed he felt, even though he was currently just focusing on formations. No wonder the Sithe had been so daring as to try and enslave all the cultivator civilizations!

"How is it?" The distant Azurefiend had been taking a nap while seated. He opened his eyes to look at Ning, a hint of excitement in his gaze. "Have you solved it?"

"Master?" Whitethaw looked at Ning as well.

"I think I have." Ning nodded.

“What do you mean, you THINK you have?” Azurefiend stared at him.

“My mental visualizations should be correct, but I need to actually try them out.” Ning took a deep breath, manifesting three heads and six arms as his aura grew markedly more powerful. All six of his arms expanded in size as they simultaneously reached out to the six black chains.

Each of the fingers on Ning’s six hands turned crystalline in color as he drew hand-seals with them. His fingers began to naturally come together into a series of formations. The formations around his six palms began to naturally merge together, almost like a marvelous mechanism that was coming together in layers. Then, Ning’s six hands separated to touch the black chains on six different spots. Some moved slowly, some moved quickly, but there was a certain natural beauty to the cadence.

Clack! One of the black chains let out a series of clattering as it began to move. The black chains began to undergo certain changes, transforming to become significantly thicker in size. The thickened black chains began to reach out towards one direction, moving alongside the Flamewing God’s leg.

Clack! The black chain covering the leg suddenly expanded and then naturally separated from the others. Once this happened, the second black chain began to stretch out as well...

All six black chains seemed to be influencing each other. In the end, all six of the chains imprisoning the Flamewing God began to naturally separate from each other.

“Get over here.” Ning reached out with all six hands, his crystalline fingers once more tapping the six chains on six different locations. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. All six black chains were released from their void anchors and flew over towards Ning. Ning dispelled the [Three Heads, Six Arms] technique. He reached out with his right hand, causing all six chains to become very fine and delicate as they coiled obediently around his arm like a bracelet.

“This is a fine treasure, a unique weapon which the Sithe used in war.” Ning smiled. “Once these chains coil around someone, they can fully

suppress it. Even Chaos Primordials can be suppressed by them! Most likely, anyone below the Autarch level of power who is trapped by them would be unable to break free.” However, Ning also knew that no one would be so stupid as to allow the chains to just coil around them.

“Flamewing. Flamewing!” Ning lept off the Flamewing God’s back and moved to stand in front of it, then gave one of its paws a little kick.

“Eh?” The slumbering Flamewing God opened its gigantic bleary eyes, then stared downwards at the tiny white-robed figure standing in front of it. Rather unhappy, it said, “Master, I’m still sleeping! Call me once you break the formations.”

Chapter 12: The Flamewing God Descends

Ji Ning secretly smirked. You are a Chaos Primordial! But all you do is eat and sleep. You have no gravitas whatsoever. “Hurry up and get up. Haven’t you noticed that the chains are gone?” Ning shook his head.

“The chains are gone?” The Flamewing God’s eyes turned huge. He hurriedly turned his head to stare at his two wings, then stared downwards from his flank to look at his four stubby legs.

“Hahaha! They’re gone! They’re really gone! Those damnable chains are finally gone!” The Flamewing God jumped to its feet, its giant body quivering in excitement. “I’ve been trapped here forever. I couldn’t even change my size or appearance, or find anything good to eat! I didn’t have a good meal until you came, Master! That was absolutely agonizing. Now? Ahahahaha!”

Flamewing raised his head and let out a delighted laugh. His laughter echoed within the hidden room, forcing Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw to all press their hands over their ears. The laughter was simply far too large.

“Change!” Flamewing boomed loudly. Whoosh! His large and winged frame instantly transformed to become the same size as Ning and Azurefiend. He was just slightly taller and very chubby. His skin was ruddy, and his eyes were rather vacant-looking, as though he wasn’t all that clever. His aura was completely reserved; he didn’t look like he posed the slightest threat to anyone at all.

“Whoah. It’s been ages since I’ve taken human form. This feels nice! None of those cultivators or Sithe would be able to recognize me like this.” Flamewing smugly shook his rear a few times. In his normal form, he was like a giant winged giant bear who loved to stretch his wings. In human form, he naturally liked to shake his rear.

“Human form?” Intrigued, Ning asked, “Flamewing, can it be that you normally spent the majority of your time in human form?”

“That’s right!” Flamewing nodded. “I only use my true form when I was

wandering in the Great Dark. That allowed me to travel faster. When I reached a realmverse, I'd occasionally feel so hungry that I'd eat the entire thing. The vast majority of the time, however, I wouldn't want to do that. That's because there are a lot of things in realmverses which are unappetizing."

A thought suddenly entered Ning's mind. Birth and death, destruction and creation... this was a form of natural rhythm the Chaosverse went through. Chaos Primordials had the intelligence levels of children... that made them perfect tools for the prime essences of the Chaosverse to exert their will. Powerful cultivators had incredibly strong Dao-hearts, making it very hard for the Chaosverse to guide them. However, guiding a Chaos Primordial was far simpler. When they felt a sudden, powerful desire to eat, they'd eat entire realmverses!

Natural destructive celestial bodies like Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels were terrifying, but they took time to be born. Even the Chaosverse needed time to create them, as well as many other factors.

"No wonder the Flamedragon Realmverse is threatened by the 'Yin-Yang Samsara Wheels', but the Autarchs won't intervene. If they intervene, they'll suffer a backlash from the Chaosverse." Ning couldn't help but sigh.

Flamewing continued, "When I'm not in the mood to eat the realmverse, I'll secretly take human form. No one will be able to discover my true entity, and I can just relax and wander through the various places within that realmverse, searching for delicacies to eat. Eheheh... when I accidentally reveal my true identity, I'll immediately slip away!"

"I'm able to sense when powerful cultivators appear nearby. It is a form of precognition, and I'll immediately slip away to ensure they cannot find me," Flamewing said smugly.

Ning nodded. No wonder so few had ever encountered a Chaos Primordial!

"Unfortunately... the last time, I sensed danger coming and immediately fled, but the Sithe were still able to catch up to me. After that, they caught

me.” The Flamewing God ground its teeth. “If I ever see another Sithe, I’ll eat him alive.”

“The Sithe were wiped out long ago. Even if a few of them are still around, you wouldn’t have a chance to kill them. The Autarchs would’ve intervened long ago,” Ning said. “Alright, now that the formations have been disrupted, you are free to leave. Come, accompany me in a visit to my homeland.”

“Alright!” Flamewing’s ruddy face was covered in excitement. “I wanna go right now! It’s been so long since I’ve visited a realmverse.”

The nearby Azurefiend and Whitethaw both felt rather embarrassed. It really was like talking to a child.

Flamewing glanced sideways at Azurefiend and Whitethaw. Suddenly, Flamewing narrowed his eyes and sauntered over to them. He soon reached Azurefiend, who stared at him, rather puzzled. “Eh?”

“Burp.” Flamewing suddenly used his rear to shove Hegemon Azurefiend to one side. “Starting today...” Flamewing slapped his chest with a pudgy hand. “I’m the boss of Master’s servants. Whitethaw, you are second. As for you, you ugly old man? You are ranked third?”

“What the hell?” Azurefiend was instantly irritated by this. The Flamewing God was like a child but was terrifyingly strong. For it to be ‘above’ him was one thing... but why the hell was the Sithe Protector golem also ranked above him?

“Because I said so, and because I don’t like you!” Flamewing glanced sideways at Azurefiend. “Don’t think I’m too stupid to notice. I can tell just from the way you look at me that you look down at me. Hmph! I’ve visited countless realmverses and seen countless cultivators. I can tell at a glance who likes me and who dislikes me. Whitethaw’s much better than you!”

The nearby Ning let out a startled laugh. At the same time, he couldn’t help but sigh. Flamewing wasn’t very smart, but he had the pure heart of a child. He could immediately tell who was good to him and who wasn’t.

“Did you hear me? I’m the boss, Whitethaw’s second, and you are third! If you don’t agree, I’ll beat you up until you do.” Flamewing tapped his pudgy white finger against Azurefiend’s chest.

“I hear you.” Azurefiend was speechless. “Fine. You are the boss, Whitethaw’s second, I’m third.” There was no point squabbling with a Chaos Primordial.

“That’s more like it.” Flamewing walked over to Ning, then said in a very fond manner, “Let’s go, Master.”

Ning rubbed his head. He felt as though he had suddenly adopted a child. “Alright. Let’s go back to the Flamedragon Realmverse,” Ning said.

“Darknorth, should we finish off Winterflame first?” Azurefiend suddenly said.

“No rush. Winterflame is like meat that’s already on the chopping block, but we would need Flamewing to actually kill him. Once Flamewing attacks, Winterflame would definitely spread the news to everyone before he dies.” Ning shook his head. “Best not to introduce too many variables into the mix for now. I’m planning to use Flamewing against the Icepeak Army.”

“The Icepeak Army dares to attack you, Master? Hmph. Leave them to me. I’ll eat them all.” Flamewing held the Icepeak Army in no regard at all. Aside from the Autarchs and the Sithe Exalts, Flamewing truly feared nothing and no one whatsoever.

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The Flamedragon Realmverse. An empty region within the imperial palace of the Brightshore Kingdom. Hegemon Brightshore’s vast form was located here.

“Eh?” Hegemon Brightshore slowly opened his eyes, a hint of confusion in them. “Why do I suddenly have a strange premonition that something major has just happened within the Flamedragon Realmverse? The last time I felt something like this was when Crimsonwave Temple appeared. The fruits within it were quite useful to Hegemons and Emperors, and the

temple itself is tremendously important.”

“This time... it doesn’t feel as though a treasure has emerged. Rather, I can sense a strange sort of pressure.” Hegemon Brightshore was puzzled. It was as though something had just happened which caused a wave of invisible pressure that pressed down on his heart, causing him alarm.

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When one had reached certain heights in cultivation, one would be able to sense when something incredibly important to them had just happened! Hegemons were second only to Autarchs when it came to actual insights into the Dao. The so-called ‘Otherverse Lords’ were nothing more than Hegemons who had managed to take control over an otherverse. With regards to the Dao, Hegemons and Otherverse Lords were on the same level. This was true even for figures like Realmslord Windgrace or the Lonely King, who had managed to take control of terrifyingly powerful Sithe war machines.

“Eh? What just happened in the Flamedragon Realmverse? I feel my heart clenching for no reason, as though something terrifying just happened.” Hegemon Windrain of the Aberrant special lifeforms was awoken from his meditations. He began to worry.

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“My senses can’t be deceiving me. Something has to have happened in the Flamedragon Realmverse. I’ll go talk to Brightshore and Windrain and see if they know what just happened.” Hegemon Netherlily of the Ancient cultivators felt rather uneasy. In the past, the truly supreme powers of the Flamedragon Realmverse had always been the three of them. They would always discuss any major events that happened.

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Ning had successfully resolved the formations, unshackling the Flamewing God and bringing it to the Flamedragon Realmverse with him into Vastheaven Palace. The only ones in the Flamedragon Realmverse who could sense that this had happened were the three Hegemons.

The major powers of other realmverses were simply too far away, and this matter was of negligible impact to them. They naturally couldn't sense anything at all. However... there was one major power in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance outside the Flamedragon Realmverse who was able to sense something. This was the true leader and most powerful member of the alliance... Realmslord Windgrace!

Chapter 13: Emperor Waveshift Returns

The Hiddenfiend Realmverse. The Blacksun.

An old man was seated atop an extremely slick boulder within a secluded courtyard. This old man had a large, tousled beard and mussed-up hair. His eyebrows were so messy that they were growing into a unibrow, giving him a very unkempt appearance. However, his face was extremely calm. His eyes were closed, and he just sat there silently in the lotus position. Each time he entered this form of silent meditation, it would last for varying amount of times. Sometimes, he could sit there for more than ten thousand chaos cycles.

Realmslord Windgrace enjoyed sitting quietly like this. When meditating, his spirit felt free and unencumbered. All sorts of thoughts and insights flowed through him. It was like both thinking and not-thinking at the same time.

At his level of insight, treasures which assisted in cultivation were of no further use. He had simply been training for far too long; he had already made breakthroughs in everything he possibly could. Right now, what he needed was a true epiphany... but true epiphanies could not be achieved via any treasures at all. The Autarch's stone dais which Ning used simply allowed him to emulate a quasi-epiphany state that allowed him to train at incredibly faster speeds, but there was nothing it could do to allow him to breach a true bottleneck.

Once one had reached a bottleneck, no treasures would be of any use in assisting you in the breakthrough. Only insights and epiphanies would suffice.

“Eh?” An invisible tendril of power suddenly snaked its way through his empty spirit like a premonition. Realmslord Windgrace suddenly opened his eyes, a hint of surprise within them. Moments later, he regained his usual calm, but he frowned in thought: “I have the feeling that a terrifying force has just emerged, one which even I am incapable of controlling. And yet, I can sense that it should be connected to me. Is it within the

Hiddenfiend Realm? Or is it elsewhere in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance?"

The Sixteen Realmverses Alliance was his territory. Even a force as arrogant as the Icepeak Army wanted to first verify that Daolord Darknorth didn't have a connection to Realmslord Windgrace before taking action. Even then, they chose to sneak into the Flamedragon Realmverse and would only act against Ji Ning and Ji Ning alone! They didn't want to cause too much trouble. This was a testament to what a preeminent power Realmslord Windgrace was.

Generally speaking, the likes of Realmslord Windgrace or the Lonely King wouldn't get involved in minor squabbles. Avoiding causing too much trouble was the key!

"If even I am incapable of controlling it... what could it be?" Realmslord Windgrace was puzzled. He immediately began to engage in some Numerancy divinations.

He had been a Hegemon for far, far too long; he was far more ancient than even Hegemon Brightshore. He had been a legendary figure even during the Dawn War, and he had been given guidance by more than one Autarch. He had reached an incredibly high level of insight into multiple Daos, and had mastered three Hegemonic Daos! However, the Dao of Numerancy was simply far too difficult to master. He had yet to reach even the Archon level in Numerancy; in fact, he was far from it. Most likely, he was merely on par with the level which Daolord Badlands would reach once the latter became a Daolord of the Fourth Step. Still, he was able to divine a few things.

"It is connected to me, and it is indeed something within the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance. However, no further details can be divined." Realmslord Windgrace frowned. The uneasy feeling in his heart made it impossible for him to meditate calmly any further.

"I have no idea where Emperor Waveshift is. My only choice is to ask Blackwood to help out," Realmslord Windgrace mused. Emperor Waveshift had obviously reached terrifying heights in the Dao of

Numerancy; he had actually reached the Hegemon level in this Dao! Although he was a bit weak in actual combat, he had reached the apex of Numerancy for anyone aside from the Autarchs! Thus, not even the likes of Realmslord Windgrace or the Lonely King were willing to offend Waveshift. Everyone treated him with the utmost of respect.

Realmslord Windgrace's first reaction was to seek out Waveshift... but alas, he was unable to find him and thus could only ask Blackwood for assistance. Although Hegemon Blackwood only trained in Numerancy as a secondary Dao, he had at least reached the Archon level in Numerancy and thus was still incredibly skilled.

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A planet that was 900 million kilometers in diameter. This planet was surrounded by eight gigantic azure wooden boards, each of which was 1.8 billion kilometers tall, 36,000 kilometers wide, and 9000 kilometers thick.

There were no living creatures on this planet, just a single bearded man who was seated on the vast earth. This was Hegemon Blackwood.

Rumble... the eight titanic wooden boards slowly swiveled around the planet. They moved like the functioning of the cosmos itself, carrying a strange, unique cadence to them.

Whoosh. Hegemon Blackwood suddenly opened his eyes. His face was a bit ashen. The eight azure wooden boards surrounding the planet quickly flew towards him and landed on his back.

“My calculations are complete. It happened in the Flamedragon Realmverse.” Hegemon Blackwood nodded slowly. “A terrifying new power has emerged, so strong as to be completely impossible. My subconscious is warning me that it is even more dominating than Realmslord Windgrace himself.”

“Who does this new force represent? Can it be that a Hegemon has discovered yet another Sithe war machine?” Hegemon Blackwood couldn't help but come to this conclusion. Terrifying Sithe war machines were capable of terrifying amounts of power. Some were stronger, some were

weaker; for example, although Ning's chain weapons had incredible suppressive and absorptive powers, they had to first be wrapped around a cultivator successfully. This meant that they were fairly unique, but of limited use in combat.

The Blacksun, however... it was just a single item, but it was capable of changing the results of an entire battlefield during the Dawn War. Realmslord Windgrace had just one Sithe war machine while the Lonely King had several, but the two were equal in status. This was why.

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"The Flamedragon Realmverse?" After Realmslord Windgrace received Hegemon Blackwood's response, he immediately sent a message: "Brightshore, Netherlily, Windrain, I believe a terrifying new force has emerged within your Flamedragon Realmverse, one which is beyond my abilities to control. You need to keep a close eye on your realmverse. Once anything unusual happens, you need to immediately inform me and I'll head there right away."

"Understood."

"We sensed something as well, a terrifying sense of pressure."

"We're already searching for it." After receiving the word from Realmslord Windgrace, all three Hegemons felt slightly more confident. If even Realmslord Windgrace was able to sense it, then that meant that they could ask him to intervene and help out if something happened.

And so Brightshore, Netherlily, and Windrain, alongside the Dao Alliance (which also received orders from Realmslord Windgrace), began to scour the Flamedragon Realmverse in an attempt to find any hints about what the premonitions entailed. Alas, the Flamedragon Realmverse remained extremely peaceful. Nothing happened at all.

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Time flowed on. More than six million years went by after the Flamewing God's release.

Whoosh. A realmship suddenly appeared at the borders of the

Flamedragon Realmverse. Just one person was within the realmship. This person was dressed in azure robes and stood tall. He didn't have any weapons on him at all, and his gaze was warm and calm, seemingly capable of seeing through to the truth of everything. When he saw the Flamedragon Realmverse appear before him, he revealed a hint of a smile: "I'm back. Flamedragon Realmverse... I, Waveshift, am back!"

This was the legendary Emperor Waveshift! In the vast Chaosverse, his web of connections was far superior to even Realmslord Windgrace. Although Windgrace was much stronger than him, the major powers located in distant realmverses and otherverses didn't care about Windgrace at all because they would probably never meet the man! There would never be anything they would need from Realmslord Windgrace... but there were many who needed favors from Emperor Waveshift.

"The feeling of coming home..." Emperor Waveshift commanded his realmship forwards, joy in his heart as he stared at the Flamedragon Realmverse.

Emperor Waveshift had a very unique aura. It was quite transcendent, almost as though he was a spectator viewing the vast Chaosverse from a lofty height.

"I never would've imagined that my homeland, the Flamedragon Realmverse, would've produced such an incredible figure that even I would sense it from afar." Emperor Waveshift had a smile on his face. He had reached such incredible heights in the Dao of Numerancy that he would have premonitions whenever anything momentous happened in his homeland, the Flamedragon Realmverse. He could sense when a new Hegemon was born, and could also sense when the Flamewing God came out alongside Ning.

"Time for me to visit this incredible newcomer." Emperor Waveshift smiled. Swoosh! His realmship tore through spacetime and began to advance towards Vastheaven Palace.

Given Emperor Waveshift's skills in Numerancy, he was able to divine where the terrifying new force was currently located. Thus, he was able to

continuously move closer towards it with ease! He couldn't even be bothered to engage in repeated divinations. Instead, he tore through spacetime and went straight to the Vastheaven Everworld. He used the information he knew regarding the entire Flamedragon Realmverse to engage in reverse-divination, skimming through the countless lines of karma to find what he wanted to know.

"It is highly probable that this incredible newcomer is that genius Daolord, Daolord Darknorth, who has managed to develop an Omega Dao." Upon reaching the Flamedragon Realmverse, Emperor Waveshift quickly came to a few rough conclusions. If his conclusions were wrong, he would then engage in a few more divinations to come to a more detailed level of understanding.

Emperor Waveshift stood there within the void outside the Vastheaven Everworld, staring at everything within it. "Ah. My guesses were correct." Emperor Waveshift nodded slowly.

The Chaosverse was filled with countless lines of karma. Although Ning was able to 'see' karma, it must be remembered that even ordinary mortals were bound by countless lines of karma. Think about how many people lived in everworlds! Everworlds were filled with so much karma, they were like seas of smoke; there was simply no way to make anything out clearly. Emperor Waveshift, however, was different. When he viewed the Waveshift Everworld, he knew that his guesses were correct.

"This new power is indeed within the Vastheaven Everworld. Daolord Darknorth, eh? I want to see just how terrifyingly powerful this new force is." Emperor Waveshift took a single step forwards and entered the Vastheaven Everworld.

Chapter 14: Ji Ning and Emperor Waveshift

Within the Vastheaven Everworld.

Ji Ning was seated in the lotus position next to a bridge, a few swirls of sword-light flowing around him. Not too far away, a chubby man was lying on the ground within a patch of flowers, crushing quite a few of them beneath his bulk. The chubby man had a haunch of meat in his hands, and he was enjoying a wonderful meal. He continuously rolled right and left while he ate, almost as though he was in a rocking cradle.

Hegemon Azurefiend was eating and drinking in a distant pavilion while occasionally casting extremely unhappy looks towards the ruddy-skinned fat man. As for Protector Whitethaw, he quietly sat in a corner. He would always be on guard for Ning.

“Life is great!” the chubby Flamewing mumbled while eating.

“Bastard Flamewing. He keeps taking my food. If it wasn’t for the fact that I can’t outfight him... bah!” Azurefiend muttered to himself as he ate, but made sure to keep up a barrier of Immortal energy to ensure that his voice did not carry. Azurefiend really was irritated. He was a glutton as well, but whenever he brought out any good food it would be taken away by Flamewing.

He was unable to outfight Flamewing. All he could do was to privately insult the Chaos Primordial, but he had to ensure that Flamewing didn’t hear it.

“Fellow Daoist Darknorth.” A voice suddenly rang out.

“Eh?” Ning opened his eyes.

“Fellow Daoist, your formations certainly are formidable. Ordinary sect formations are unable to bar my path, and I’m able to bypass them with ease. The formations you set up, however, are inscrutable and unfathomable. I’m not able to breach them yet.” A voice rang out from outside Vastheaven Palace.

Ning turned to look, only to see an azure-robed man standing in the air outside the formations. Ning couldn't help but feel shocked when he saw this man, who gave Ning a very unique feeling. The man radiated a transcendent aura, almost as though he was beyond all worldly concerns. Ning could even 'see' that the karma surrounding this person was extremely calm and warm. The karma lines were all neat and orderly, as though they were under the azure-robed man's complete control. This was because this azure-robed man was not bound by his karma; instead, he used it as a form of tool.

Of all the people Ning had ever encountered, only Autarch Titanos surpassed this man. Autarch Titanos had completely surpassed karma itself, which didn't even touch him.

"Please come in, fellow Daoist." Ning immediately opened up the formations and invited the azure-robed man in. The azure-robed man walked through the air to come in, then entered Ning's estate.

"A Hegemon... the legends said, Daolord Darknorth, that you have a Hegemonic retainer by your side. This must be Hegemon Azurefiend." The azure-robed man cast a sidelong glance at the distant Hegemon Azurefiend, then turned his gaze to the still-feasting chubby man who was rolling around within the flowers. A hint of surprise finally appeared in the azure-robed man's eyes, and he let out a shocked laugh: "So it is a Chaos Primordial! Impressive, truly impressive! Judging from its karma lines... Daolord Darknorth, you actually managed to tame a Chaos Primordial? I truly do admire you."

Ning was speechless. The karma lines connecting him and Flamewing were indeed quite thick, but how was it that this person was able to immediately recognize Flamewing as a Chaos Primordial? It must be remembered that Flamewing's transformation ability was an innate gift; not even Ning himself was able to see any flaws in it.

"And who are you?" The skinny old Hegemon Azurefiend walked over, an unhappy frown on his face. This newcomer had immediately called him a 'Hegemonic retainer' and didn't seem to have much respect for him. This naturally displeased Azurefiend greatly... and he didn't feel as though

this person was much of a threat to him.

“My name is Waveshift,” the azure-robed man said. Ignoring the shocked look which appeared on Hegemon Azurefiend’s face, he turned to look at Ning. “I was previously wandering the outside world when I suddenly sensed that a new power had emerged within my homeland. Thus, I immediately hastened back. I was able to divine that the new power was within the Vastheaven Everworld and thus came to your residence, Daolord Darknorth. I never would’ve imagined that this new power would be a Chaos Primordial! Truly praiseworthy, Daolord... with a Chaos Primordial at your command, you are now an incredible figure of the Chaosverse.”

Ning felt rather stunned, but was able to maintain an outwards appearance of calm. “Emperor Waveshift, you truly do surprise me. I never would’ve imagined that I’d be able to meet you today. Come, come! Please have a seat. Let us chat.”

“Very well.” Emperor Waveshift nodded.

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Ning was filled with admiration and curiosity towards the legendary Emperor Waveshift, while Emperor Waveshift also viewed Ji Ning as a truly legendary Daolord.

Anyone capable of becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step via an Omega Dao could be described as a legendary figure. Incredibly few had ever accomplished this; there were far more Otherverse Lords than Omega Daolords. As for a Daolord capable of convincing a Hegemon to become a retainer? That was even rarer... and now, this Daolord had even tamed a Chaos Primordial! Emperor Waveshift truly did feel admiration towards Ning.

The two chatted and laughed together, quickly finding out that they were birds of a feather.

“Ah, so that’s how it is.” Emperor Waveshift nodded. “The Icepeak Army truly is famous for its arrogance and overbearing behavior. As they see it, you are a Daolord with a limited lifespan. Once you fail your Daomerge,

people will end up fighting over the realmship anyhow. It only makes sense for them to want to get a head start on it. Given that you also embarrassed them... there's no way the Icepeak Army is going to let things rest. Still, this time they should merely be sending one of their Golden Emperors, 'Lord Wulf', and the Black Emperors under his command. Given that you have a Chaos Primordial, they are of no threat to you whatsoever."

Ning nodded in agreement.

"Oh, right. When I arrived at Vastheaven Palace, I saw that the formations protecting it truly are marvelous," Emperor Waveshift said. "Although the Dao of Formations is a secondary Dao for me, I've still reached the Archon level in it. Given my skills in Numerancy, I'm usually quite skilled in dissecting formations, but I found your formations to be quite difficult and complex."

Ning laughed. "Big brother Waveshift, you truly are formidable. You were able to recognize them as being set down by me with just one glance."

"A minor parlor trick. Divination is the only thing I am good at," Emperor Waveshift said. By now, the two were already on such good terms that they were referring to each other as 'brother'.

"My formations primarily stem from two completely different schools of thought which belong to the Sithe lineage. Their power stems from the combination of these two schools of thought," Ning said.

"No wonder." Emperor Waveshift nodded, then said, "You've only trained for a brief period of time, but you've reached such heights in the art of formations. You truly are a genius who has mastered an Omega Dao! Although we've only known each other for a short period of time, I feel that we are quite similar. I must remind you, now that you have a Chaos Primordial there is no one capable of posing a threat to you. You need to focus on your cultivating. To you, the greatest problem shall be the Daomerge! If you fail the Daomerge... ugh. Well. But if you succeed, you'll gain eternal life and we'll be able to meet often."

Cultivators each had their own unique personalities. Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Windrain, Hegemon Netherlily... they all had their own unique temperaments. Ning was on fairly good terms with them, but he wasn't exactly close friends with them.

The experiences he had shared with Ninedust had resulted in them slowly becoming friends for life. As for Emperor Waveshift? They shared extremely similar personalities, resulting in both taking a liking to the other right away. As a result, they became friends as well. It wasn't easy for major powers to become friends with each other. Now that they were friends, Emperor Waveshift couldn't help but worry about Darknorth's chances at the Daomerge.

"The Daomerge... all I can do is try my utmost with no looking back. As for whether I succeed or not... so long as I do my best, I'll have no regrets," Ning said.

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Time flowed on. To Emperors, two chaos cycles was a very short period of time. Thus, Emperor Waveshift decided to temporarily take up residence in Vastheaven Palace. Later on, when Emperor Solesky learned that the legendary Emperor Waveshift was actually within his own palace, he was scared silly. He only kept it secret after being requested to do so by Ning and Waveshift.

Emperor Waveshift would only meet those he wanted to meet. There were many he did not wish to meet; they would just bring too much trouble.

Ten million years after Emperor Waveshift's arrival.

"Darknorth." Emperor Waveshift and Ning were seated next to each other, playing a game of chess. As a master of formations, Ning was quite skilled in chess, while Emperor Waveshift was naturally even better. It was rare for them to encounter such excellent opponents and so they often played chess against each other.

"Hm?" Ning glanced over at Emperor Waveshift.

“The Icepeak Army should be arriving soon,” Emperor Waveshift said.

“Let us go and welcome them.”

“They’ve arrived?” Ning’s eyes lit up.

“The Icepeak Army?” Hegemon Azurefiend and the chubby Flamewing were eating and drinking together off in the distance. Both turned to look at Ning.

Ning immediately rose to his feet and called out, “Let’s head out and give the Icepeak Army a proper welcome.”

“They’ve finally come. Grrr... I’m going to eat them all!” Flamewing was quite excited. He had been waiting for this day for quite some time.

Whoosh. Ning, Emperor Waveshift, Flamewing, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw all boarded Ning’s realmship, then flew out to the margins of the Flamedragon Realmverse.

“Let’s wait for them here.” The azure-robed Emperor Waveshift stared off into the endless Great Dark. “In roughly the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, the Icepeak Army shall arrive.”

Ning felt a sense of absolute reverence for this level of Numerancy-fueled precognitive foresight.

Chapter 15: Kill!

“Here they come,” Emperor Waveshift suddenly said.

Ji Ning also saw how a series of ripples began to appear at the margins of the Great Dark. Moments later an enormous spacetime tear appeared within the darkness, followed by a realmship flying out of it.

“Hmph!” An angered snort rang out from within the realmship as an aura of tremendous might swept outwards, causing Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw to turn slightly pale. Emperor Waveshift and the Flamewing God remained as composed as ever.

Emperor Waveshift wasn’t all that powerful, but he had experienced many, many things. He had met some truly terrifying figures and had been to many mysterious places, far more than even the Lonely King or Realmslord Windgrace. He truly was the embodiment of the term ‘highly experienced’; naturally, he was able to maintain his equanimity when encountering a single Golden Emperor.

As for Flamewing? Most likely, only Sithe Exalts or the Autarchs were capable of inspiring dread in him.

“How bold. You actually dare to appear before me.” A series of figures began to fly out of the realmship, with a humanoid figure that glittered like gold at their head. Behind him was a total of nine black humanoids, each of whom had auras of transcendent power.

A single Golden Emperor was equivalent to an Otherverse Lord in power! Nine Black Emperors fighting in concert were also a match for an Otherverse Lord! The amount of pressure they brought to their foes was truly incredible.

“Waveshift?” The Golden Emperor, Lord Wulf, turned to look at Emperor Waveshift. A hint of astonishment flashed past his eyes. He snorted coldly, “No wonder Daolord Darknorth just so happened to be waiting for us right here. So he has you standing behind him, Emperor Waveshift! I’ve heard of you long ago, but today is the first time we’ve met. Are you here to stop me?”

Emperor Waveshift laughed. “If I asked you to leave, would you actually leave?”

“Of course not.” Lord Wulf had a more baleful and more dominating aura than anyone Ning had ever encountered, and he held Emperor Waveshift in no regard at all. “Those who like you, Emperor Waveshift, will flatter you... but to those who don’t like you, you aren’t worth half a damn!”

Lord Wulf was an incredibly proud figure. There was nothing he wanted from Emperor Waveshift, and this was actually the very first time the two had met despite both having lived for countless years. He naturally felt no respect for Waveshift, an Emperor who didn’t even have the combat power of a Hegemon.

“Yes, I’m quite weak; my talents lie in Numerancy and Numerancy alone. My friends flatter me, but to those who have no need of my talents I truly am worth very little.” Emperor Waveshift remained quite calm and composed.

Lord Wulf’s face was a mask of icy arrogance, but many thoughts flitted through his mind. “Emperor Waveshift is actually here... can this be a scheme of some kind? But as a Golden Emperor, I’m even better at staying alive than actual Otherverse Lords. Given my power and the power of the nine Black Emperors who serve me, the only person in this area who would pose a threat to me should be Realmslord Windgrace! Even if Emperor Waveshift is plotting against me, he won’t be able to do anything to me at all.”

“I’ll overwhelm them with raw power. In front of absolute power, all schemes are nothing more than jokes.” Lord Wulf was extremely confident in his abilities.

“Daolord Darknorth.” Lord Wulf stared at the distant white-robed youth who bore that black sheath on his back. Ning was looking at him as well, and their gazes met in the air.

“General Wulf,” Ning responded.

“You are an impressive Daolord. Truly, you are incredible,” Lord Wulf

said. "I've been alive for a very long time, but you are the only Daolord I have any respect for."

"You praise me too much, General," Ning said.

"Don't be modest. A Daolord who can reach Hegemonic levels of power and even command a Hegemon retainer truly is incredible." Lord Wulf glanced sideways at Azurefiend, who was by Ning's side. "However... your retainer is a bit too cowardly. I would've committed suicide long ago."

Cold light flickered through Azurefiend's eyes.

"My contempt is reserved for those who commit suicide," Ning said.

"Hm?" Lord Wulf frowned as he looked at the white-robed youth, then said coldly, "You really don't know what's good for you. No wonder you dared to make an enemy out of our Icepeak Army! Daolord Darknorth, as a Daolord you shall merely live for 108,000 chaos cycles. This is an incredibly short period of time! Once your lifespan comes to an end, you shall perish and your realmship will fall into the hands of others. In fact, there might even be a great battle over it. Emperors like myself who possess limitless lifespans can use it to wander the many realmverses and see more things... but for you to hold a realmship is an absolute waste! I urge you to hand it over. That way, you'll at least remain alive," Lord Wulf said.

He had been planning to attack immediately, but when he saw Emperor Waveshift... he still felt extremely confident in his chances, but he chose to be just a bit more cautious than he otherwise would have been.

"Hand it over?" Ning shook his head. "Why should I just hand my treasures over to you?"

"Are you sure you are going to refuse me?" The baleful aura surrounding Lord Wulf began to froth and churn. The hint of caution he had felt upon seeing Emperor Waveshift was beginning to dissipate, and his innate brutal disposition was beginning to reveal itself once more.

"I refuse." Ning shook his head.

"You are courting death." Lord Wulf's gaze turned cold. He pointed

angrily at Ning as his voice echoed throughout the surrounding area: “Kill them all, and exterminate Vastheaven Palace! Let everyone know what happens when they make enemies out of our Icepeak Army!”

“Acknowledged,” the nine onyx humanoids simultaneous said respectfully. “Kill them all!”

“Kill!” Murderous looks appeared on the faces of the nine Black Emperors, and their auras began to flare with awesome power. They were like nine streaks of black light that split apart the void as they shot forward. They had long ago grown accustomed to warfare and conquest! They had completely uprooted and destroyed quite a few powerful organizations; to them, an organization that was merely headed by a Daolord was nothing worth mentioning at all.

“Flamewing, kill them all!” Ning pointed towards his foes and issued an order as well.

“I’ve been waiting for you to say that.” Flamewing had been standing restlessly by Ning’s side. Upon hearing the order, he wagged his big butt excitedly, then let out an excited roar. This ordinary-looking fatty suddenly transformed into a dazzling ball of blazing fire which had a strange creature inside of it, a creature that looked like a fiery-winged bear.

The nine attacking Black Emperors all revealed looks of nervousness and puzzlement. They could sense incredible danger, but they had no idea what it was they were looking at.

“Eh?” The distant Lord Wulf suddenly turned pale.

“GWAAAAR!” Flamewing let out a shocking roar, and as he did so he belched forth a torrent of dark-red flames from his mouth. It almost instantly covered the surrounding void, including the nine Black Emperors who were charging in their direction.

“What’s that?!”

“ARGH! Not good, those flames are too powerful. Quick, run!”

The nine Black Emperors felt tremendous pain as soon as those dark-red flames touched them. Even their black skin began to slowly melt away!

Although they were a bit more powerful than Whitethaw, they were still just Black Emperors; in other words, they were living beings who had used the Ritual Sacrificium to inherit a certain level of power. In contrast, Whitethaw was a ‘pure’ golem who was designed for defense; his survival abilities were far superior to theirs.

“What terrifying flames. These flames are far more powerful than even a Hegemon’s flames,” Waveshift said with an amazed sigh.

“Ordinary Hegemons would be burned to death by those flames,” the nearby Azurefiend said. “These Black Emperors have incredibly tough bodies; they are just melting slightly from the heat.”

Whoosh. As Flamewing belched out those terrifying dark-red flames, his wings fluttered and sent him streaking forwards like a bolt of terrifying light.

“That’s fast!” Ning was shocked. Flamewing was flying far faster than even a realmship!

“That creature is far too fast!” Hegemon Thunderstar, hiding off in the distance within his own realmship, was shocked by this as well. He had become a Hegemon via the Dao of Lightning and could be described as having reached the very apex of speed amongst cultivators, but he still felt astonishment. “He’s far, far faster than me. How can he be this fast?!”

Why was Flamewing known as the Flamewing God? It was precisely because of how incredibly fast he flew. This was why many classified him as a bird, as his prowess lay in his flight speed. Attacking techniques were of secondary importance.

Riiip. Flamewing transformed into a streak of light and almost instantly shot towards a Black Emperor. He reached out with one of his chubby paws and swiped at the Black Emperor with it, causing the Black Emperor’s arm to twist unnaturally. A large wound appeared on the Black Emperor’s chest as well, so deep as to expose the countless stone passageways located within his chest. One of the planets inside his body completely exploded. This was a lethal blow for the Black Emperor, who instantly lost his life as a result.

Slash! Yet another paw-strike, this time aimed at the head of a Black Emperor. Although Black Emperors had incredibly sturdy heads, it was still possible for one to shatter those heads with enough power. As a result, this second Black Emperor died as well.

“Retreat, quick!” Lord Wulf could do nothing but watch as this all happened, his eyes threatening to leave their sockets. As soon as he had seen those dark-red flames, he knew something was wrong and so he immediately charged forwards to rescue his subordinate... but compared to Flamewing, his flying speed was far, far slower. They were on completely different levels.

Chapter 16: The Shocking Chaos

Primordial

These Black Emperors moved far more slowly than the Flamewing God, and the terrifying dark-red flames had only caused them to slow down even further.

As for Lord Wulf coming to reinforce them? They immediately gave up that notion. Given his speed, by the time he flew over, the Flamewing God would've pretty much killed them all. Thus... they had to take care of themselves!

“Join forces.”

“Work together to buy some time.”

“We only need to hold on for an instant.” The onyx humanoids were all absolutely terrified. It was as though they had met their natural predator! Fortunately, the nine of them had charged over together and thus were quite close to each other. By the time the Flamewing God had killed two of them, the other seven had already quickly gathered together.

“Hide inside this estate-treasure first.” One of the Black Emperors tossed out an estate-type treasure.

Crack! The dark-red flames were powerful enough to kill even Hegemons. This top-grade Eternal estate-treasure instantly began to crack apart, followed by the treasure being completely destroyed.

Whoooosh! Bathed in flames, the Flamewing God’s wings fluttered a single time, sending it straight towards the seven Black Emperors.

“Block!” The seven Black Emperors simultaneously swept out with their palms as the silver diagrams covering their bodies began to light up. An awesomely cold aura swept out from them as ice began to form over their gigantic black palms, sweeping towards the attacking Flamewing God.

“Grrr... die!” Flamewing was a dominating force of nature; it naturally chose to meet their attacks head-on! It flew straight towards its

opponents, its giant bear-like paws smashing downwards with such power that even Ning and Azurefiend felt their hearts tremble as they watched from afar. Its attack collided head-on against the giant black palms of the seven Black Emperors.

BOOM! This was a collision of incredible power, and it instantly caused space around them to completely collapse and crumble.

When the seven Black Emperors joined forces, they were able to unleash an amount of power that was equal to that of an Otherverse Lord's. Although they were clearly at a disadvantage when battling the Flamewing God, they were at least able to briefly pause it in its tracks.

As for the seven Black Emperors themselves, they were knocked flying backwards, their bodies trembling and crackling as a large amount of tears and injuries appeared on them. They had suffered incredibly heavy injuries; even they would need quite a long period of time to completely recover.

Whoosh. The Flamewing God was enraged at having been briefly stopped in its tracks. It once more fluttered its wings. Swoosh! It instantly swept through the void and charged at the Black Emperors, who were still in the process of being blasted in each direction. They didn't have the chance to recover yet.

“Not good.”

“Flee separately.”

“Save yourselves!” The Black Emperors had all suffered heavy injuries, and they had been blasted backwards with such force that they had lost control over themselves. It was impossible for them to once more join forces to block the Flamewing God, and so they simply followed the momentum of the previous blast and began to flee for their lives.

Riiiiip! The Flamewing God was able to move at incredible speeds. Its claws swept past the body of one of the fleeing Black Emperors, instantly tearing the Black Emperor's chest open. Quite a number of critical systems lay within the chest, and so this strike was a lethal one.

“GWAAAAR!” Flamewing opened its giant maw and bit down, crushing a Black Emperor to bits with its teeth, then crunching through the remains and swallowing them.

This was one of the most terrifying beasts in existence in the Chaosverse... a Chaos Primordial! They would often eat entire realmverses when hungry. In comparison, these onyx humanoids were devoured with ease by Flamewing. In fact, Flamewing rather enjoyed the chewiness.

“Stop that immediately!” Lord Wulf had finally arrive. Slash! Lord Wulf had moved to bar Flamewing’s path, but Flamewing was still able to land a clawing blow to a Black Emperor’s back, causing his spine to completely cave in and a series of crackling sounds to emanate from his body. The Black Emperor’s aura instantly whittled away into nothingness.

“DIE, damn you!” The enraged Lord Wulf suddenly drew a saber in each of his two hands. SLASH! SLASH! A pair of rainbow-like streaks of saber-light chopped through the skies, filled with Lord Wulf’s boundless rage and murderous will. The twin blows chopped straight towards the Flamewing God, who simply fluttered its wings and used them to block the two strikes like a shield. BOOM! The shockwave from this collision was even more powerful than the one generated by the clash between Flamewing and the seven Black Emperors.

Lord Wulf was sent flying backwards, while Flamewing came to a halt as well. It glanced at Lord Wulf, slightly surprised.

“Damn, damn, damn!” Lord Wulf glanced behind himself, only to see the four heavily wounded surviving Black Emperors fleeing towards the distant realmship. This caused Lord Wulf to feel a sense of pain in his heart. “I had nine Black Emperors... and now, I’ve suddenly lost five of them. The Icepeak Army has never, in all its history, suffered such catastrophic losses before!”

The Icepeak Army had conquered all within its path, stirring up one war after another, but even then its total losses had merely been eight Black Emperors. This time, they had been planning to slay this puny Daolord with ease... and yet they had instantly lost five of their Black Emperors?!

“You are pretty strong. You should be on par with those Otherverse Lords. I probably won’t be able to kill you,” Flamewing growled. “So you can go ahead and fuck off. Can’t be bothered to fight you! If it wasn’t for the fact that those seven were able to block me briefly, I would’ve wiped them all out by now.”

Indeed. Given the Flamewing God’s terrifying speed, he was in fact capable of killing all of the onyx humanoids before Lord Wulf had arrived. However, that extra moment of time the seven Black Emperors had bought themselves by joining forces had caused the Flamewing God to briefly slow down, resulting in ‘just’ five perishing and four escaping.

“Y-you...!” Lord Wulf felt even angrier. He had never suffered such catastrophic losses before, and felt as though he was about to go crazy. “DIE!”

“I can’t beat you to death so I was planning on not beating you up at all... but you insist on attacking ME?” Flamewing let out a furious roar as he charged over.

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Space for ten billion kilometers around them completely collapsed, with the void itself having been ground up into countless tiny scorching pieces of space-sand as the titanic Flamewing battled furiously against that golden figure.

This was combat on a completely different level, a clash of the titans. Flamewing had the advantage and was completely dominating the golden figure, smashing it backwards over and over again! However, Golden Emperors simply had incredibly durable bodies; not a single scratch could be seen on Lord Wulf’s golden form, and so Lord Wulf continued to attack again and again with his indescribably exquisite Hegemonic saber-arts.

The terrifying clashes caused Ning and Azurefiend to both tremble.

“So this is what a battle between Otherverse Lords looks like?” Ning nodded slowly. Flamewing was indeed quite a bit stronger than an Otherverse Lord, but it was still incapable of actually killing them. In the end, its insights into the Dao were simply too weak. It completely relied on

its innate gifts to do battle, and thus Otherverse Lords were able to stay alive in the face of its onslaught. However, there was no way they could actually overpower Flamewing in a frontal clash.

Even someone whose body was as durable as Lord Wulf, a Golden Emperor, was sent flying backwards with every single clash. However, rage caused Lord Wulf to continue to press the futile attack.

It truly was a scene of apocalyptic might. Even Hegemons would perish before attacks like these! “And this is just one of the Icepeak Army’s generals...” Azurefiend let out an amazed sigh.

“He is a Golden Emperor. Even the Lonely King himself is just a Golden Emperor,” the nearby Emperor Waveshift said. “The Lonely King’s advantage lies in his war machines, but those war machines would barely tickle your Flamewing God; there’s no way they can damage the Flamewing God’s nigh-indestructible body. Thus, even if the Lonely King came he would still be dominated and abused by your Chaos Primordial. This is what makes those creatures so terrifying.”

Ning nodded. Suddenly, a spacetime ripple appeared off in the distance, followed by a white-robed, white-bearded elder with six curved horns on his head emerging from a spacetime rift. It was Hegemon Brightshore.

“What terrifying shockwaves!” Hegemon Brightshore stared ashen-faced at the apocalyptic scene before him. This was a level of combat which was vastly beyond him, and these shockwaves were on a completely different level as well.

“Such power! Is this the terrifying force which Realmslord Windgrace spoke of, the force which is beyond even his ability to control?” Yet another figure appeared in the distance. It was Hegemon Windrain.

“A Golden Emperor? One of the legendary Golden Emperors, who are supposedly on par with Otherverse Lords, is being completely dominated in battle? Where the hell did this beast come from?!” Hegemon Netherlily appeared as well. The terrifying shockwaves from this battle had been sensed by all three of the mighty Hegemons of the Flamedragon Realmverse, and so they had all hastened over here.

On one side was Hegemon Thunderstar and his realmship, along with the four surviving Black Emperors. On the other side was Ning's party and the three newly arrived Hegemons. All of them stared, stunned, as the battle progressed between Flamewing and the crazed Lord Wulf.

"Damn, damn, DAMN! AAAAAAARGH!" Lord Wulf let out an infuriated bellow which rang out in every direction, his voice filled with rage, resentment, and humiliation. He had never been as angry as he was right now! He had launched countless attacks, but he wouldn't be able to continue fighting like this. This was because the energy stores in his body would begin to be exhausted if he kept this up, at which point he would be in mortal danger.

"Daolord Darknorth, I won't forget this. I won't forget this!" Lord Wulf turned to glare at the distant white-robed youth, his eyes filled with terrifying hatred and malice.

"Let's go!" Lord Wulf immediately began to flee.

Chapter 17: Pursuit

“Oh, NOW you want to flee?” By now, the Flamewing God had been thoroughly enraged by Lord Wulf as well. Its wings fluttered, sending it soaring through the void at terrifying speeds as it instantly caught up to the fleeing Lord Wulf. Flamewing once more sent its clawed paws against Lord Wulf: “So you think you can just attack and run as you please?”

BOOM! A titanic explosion rang out. Lord Wulf remained undamaged, and the warblades in his hands seemed to spin like circles of light. He himself arced outwards, borrowing from the momentum of the shockwave to continue fleeing. His body was so tough that it was completely undamaged.

Lord Wulf continued to flee, while Flamewing pressed the attack.

“Chase him down, Flamewing!” Ning ordered mentally.

“Leave it to me. This guy thinks he can just flee whenever he wants? It won’t be that easy!” Flamewing chased furiously, giving vent to his rage.

“Let’s follow them!” Ning waved his hand, producing his realmship. Ning, Azurefiend, Emperor Waveshift, and Whitethaw all flew into it.

“Darknorth, let us watch as well!” Hegemon Brightshore flew over, followed by Hegemon Netherlily and Hegemon Windrain. They were extremely interested in watching a battle between Otherverse Lord-level combatants, especially since they themselves were in no danger. The brief part of the battle they had seen earlier had already caused them to learn a few things. Without question, the mysterious and terrifying beast which had completely dominated the Golden Emperor had to be on Ning’s side.

“Alright, let’s go together.” Ning didn’t refuse them. And so Ning, Emperor Waveshift, Azurefiend, Brightshore, Windrain, Netherlily, and Whitethaw all rode the realmship as it chased after the two combatants. Although in raw speed alone Ning was unable to make the realmship move as fast as the Flamewing God, Lord Wulf was much much slower than both of them. As the Flamewing God continued to hunt after and beat down upon Lord Wulf, Ning and the others were able to keep up with

ease.

“Waveshift!”

“Long time no see, Waveshift.” Hegemon Brightshore and the other two Hegemons all greeted Emperor Waveshift. Like them, Emperor Waveshift was a native of the Flamedragon Realmverse; he had naturally met all three of them long ago. They chatted amongst themselves as they watched the distant, high-level battle occurring before them.

“Darknorth, is this creature one of those legendary ‘Chaos Primordials’?” Hegemon Brightshore soon asked the question he wanted to ask the most. The nearby Hegemon Windrain and Hegemon Netherlily were both curious as well.

Ning nodded. “It is indeed a Chaos Primordial. Its name is the ‘Flamewing God’.”

“No wonder.”

“I knew it. Only the legendary Chaos Primordials could possibly possess such a level of power.” Hegemon Brightshore and the others were enlightened. Although they had their guesses, they had never actually seen a Chaos Primordial before. Those were legendary creatures which were never seen.

“Incredible, simply incredible! Flamewing God, a Chaos Primordial, is battling against the Icepeak Army. It must have been tamed, right?” Hegemon Windrain asked.

Hegemon Netherlily turned to look at Emperor Waveshift. A smile on her face, she said, “Waveshift, did you tame this Chaos Primordial?”

All of them felt amazement and awe. The legendary Chaos Primordials were incredibly rare, and taming one of the creatures was something out of the myths! Still, for Emperor Waveshift to accomplish this was shocking but believable to them. Emperor Waveshift was often invited and feted by the most supreme of major powers, who asked him to accompany them to some incredibly mysterious places. It was believable for him to have been lucky enough to tame a Chaos Primordial on one of those trips.

“I don’t have that sort of ability.” Emperor Waveshift shook his head. “It was Darknorth who tamed it.”

“Darknorth?” Hegemon Brightshore and the others all turned to stare at Ning in disbelief. For a moment, none of them knew what to say.

Daolord Darknorth was an absolute monster! They had never heard of such a terrifying Daolord. It would be understandable if a powerful Emperor like the Lonely King or Hegemon Windrain had tamed a Chaos Primordial, but a Daolord?! This was truly miraculous.

“Nothing more than lucky.” Ning calmly watched as the battle proceed, his gaze focused on the enemy realmship that was following from behind like a streak of lightning. “That realmship really is fast. It flies far more quickly than even my own realmship. I can sense from its sudden bursts of speed that it’s even faster than Flamewing.”

“Hegemon Thunderstar became a Hegemon via the Dao of Lightning. He’s extremely skilled in speed, and when he is in command of a realmship he’s able to more perfectly draw out its full power than many, allowing it to move much faster,” the nearby Emperor Waveshift said. “Thus, personal insights truly do matter. Different treasures in the hands of different major powers will be capable of unleashing different levels of might.”

Ning nodded.

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Whoosh. Hegemon Thunderstar kept his realmship at the margins of the battle, hiding far away and watching as the Flamewing God continued its pursuit.

“Thunderstar, hurry up and go rescue our general!” the other four Black Emperors urged desperately.

“There’s no way for me to save him.” Hegemon Thunderstar shook his head. “That Chaos Primordial is too fast. Although I’m skilled in flying, my speed still isn’t even close to being on par with that creature’s. Even though I’m in command of a realmship which is famous for its speed, I’m

still just slightly faster than it. The problem is, your general Lord Wulf is far too slow, even slower than me flying normally! The Chaos Primordial continues to circle around him. Once I go nearby, I'll probably be captured by it as well... and once it captures us, we're doomed."

"Ugh."

"Damn." The four Black Emperors were utterly enraged as well. They had suffered severe mental and physical blows from this, but they knew just how terrifying the Flamewing God was. It had slain five of their comrades in the blink of an eye, after all! If they had been just a heartbeat slower, they would've died as well.

"Don't worry. I can tell that Lord Wulf is more than capable of keeping himself alive," Hegemon Thunderstar said.

"Yes, the general has stopped launching all those crazy attacks. If all he needs to do is keep himself alive, he's able to dramatically lessen the amount of energy he uses up. He'll be able to keep fighting for an extremely long period of time."

"Although that Chaos Primordial is very strong, its insights are too weak. Its attacks are all quite clumsy, making it easy for the general to stay alive." All four of the Black Emperors nodded.

However, they also knew that Lord Wulf was only able to keep himself safe thanks to the fact that he had an Otherverse Lord's combat prowess! Black Emperors like them? Yes, the Chaos Primordial might have an extremely low level of insight into the Dao, but it would still crush them with contemptuous ease. No amount of insights would be enough in the face of such an overwhelming disparity in power.

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Boom!

Slash!

Whoosh!

Lord Wulf was being battered around like a ball. Each time, he was able

to exquisitely time his defenses to make use of the momentum generated by the Flamewing God's attacks to flee, allowing him to use up just a small amount of his energy even though he was sent flying repeatedly. Lord Wulf remained quite calm, and he continued to pay close attention to the realmship following behind them. "Daolord Darknorth. I won't forget about this. Just wait and see."

Time flowed on, with the pursuit lasting for tens of thousands of years. Ning continued to pursue the two in his realmship, but the frown on his face was beginning to deepen.

He was continuing the pursuit because he didn't wish to give up the chance to kill a Golden Emperor. His Chaos Primordial was born with tremendous karmic blessings and had a virtually indestructible body as well as unearthly amounts of strength with it replenished incredibly fast. This was why the Sithe had chosen to use it as a power source for the Jadefire Realm! Golden Emperors, however, replenished their energy stores much more slowly. Ning had been eagerly awaiting the sight of Lord Wulf exhausting his energy stores, at which point he would probably perish.

Alas, his foe was no fool. Lord Wulf had ceased his frenzied attacks and was instead borrowing from the momentum of Flamewing's own strikes. As a result, he was keeping energy expenditures low enough that he was able to replenish whatever he used up, allowing him to resist for an extremely long period of time.

"It's been tens of thousands of years, but Lord Wulf remains able to defend with ease." Ning frowned. "It seems clear that his energy expenditure rates are below his replenishment rates."

"Come back, Flamewing." Ning finally issued the order.

"GWAR!" Flamewing let out a final, proud roar within the Great Dark. For it, pursuing an opponent for tens of thousands of years was nothing. It could spend an entire chaos cycle just taking a nap!

The fleeing Lord Wulf was briefly startled. Moments later, he realized that the Flamewing God had finally ceased its pursuit. Only then did Lord

Wulf turn to fly towards Hegemon Thunderstar's realmship.

Swoosh. He quickly flew into the realmship, which then sped up dramatically and transformed into a dazzling streak of electric light and disappeared into the Great Dark.

Ning quietly stared into the darkness. The nearby Emperor Waveshift said, "In terms of energy stores, Chaos Primordials vastly outstrip Otherverse Lords. Alas, its insights into the Dao are too low-level. It is like a child, capable of just the most basic forms of combat! Thus, all of its overwhelming power is of no use; it's only able to suppress, not kill, Otherverse Lords in combat. The legends say that there has never been an Otherverse Lord or a Golden Emperor who has perished to a Chaos Primordial."

Ning nodded. "It does not make efficient use of its power. The Sithe were able to take all of its terrifying energy to set up the Jadefire Realm, then transform it into a 'Decimatus Wave' which could kill Otherverse Lords with ease."

If Flamewing had reached Ning's level of insights into the Dao, it would be able to kill Golden Emperors with ease. Alas, its insights into the Dao were negligibly low, and it possessed just the most basic of animalistic instincts. All it knew was the most basic forms of attack.

"A pity that we had to let that Golden Emperor escape," Azurefiend mumbled.

"We can't chase after it any longer. If we did, then we'd be in trouble once the Lonely King commanded the rest of the Icepeak Army to come and reinforce them," Emperor Waveshift said. "By then, we'd have no choice but to hide behind the Flamewing God's protection."

Chapter 18: Two Competing Sides

Ji Ning nodded. The entire Icepeak Army had a total of four Golden Emperors, with the most powerful being the Lonely King due to his possession of multiple Sithe war machines. He had destroyed even otherverses with those machines! The Flamewing God was all by itself, after all; it would be very hard for it to fight that many people at once. If it had to protect others as well, the only way for it to do so would be for them to hide within its estate-world as it fought.

Of course, Ning could've ordered for the Flamewing God to charge straight into the Lonely King's base. In other words, if this battle truly got out of hand it wouldn't be good for anyone involved.

Whoosh. Flamewing transformed back into a ruddy-faced fatty and re-entered the realmship. "That was a good fight! Its been ages since I've had the chance to fight like that. Whew!" Flamewing was quite delighted with itself. "That Lord Wolf or Wolfe or whatever, he sure can take a beating! I can't even count the number of times I whacked him, but I just couldn't put him down."

Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Netherlily, Hegemon Windrain, and Azurefiend all stared at the fatty with a look of some dread. This harmless-looking man was capable of butchering Hegemons with ease when he fought. Even Otherverse Lords would be completely dominated, albeit still capable of staying alive.

"And who are these three?" Flamewing glanced at Hegemon Brightshore and the other two, then licked its lips. "Master, should I eat them?"

"Don't!" Hegemon Brightshore and the others were badly frightened by that offhand comment.

"They are my friends, Flamewing. Stop causing trouble," Ning immediately said.

"Oh." Flamewing nodded, then casually slouched over a nearby chair. It then waved its hand, causing some food to appear which it began to munch down on.

“Chaos Primordials truly are exceptional!” Hegemon Brightshore let out a relieved breath. All of them unconsciously moved closer towards Ning, wanting to keep a safe distance away from the Flamewing God.

“My horizons have been expanded after seeing that battle,” Hegemon Windrain said with a sigh. “I’ve often heard of how terrifying the battles between Otherverse Lords can be, but I’ve never witnessed one myself. Experts on that level rarely fight, after all! This was the very first time, and it truly was an incredible sight. They really do completely surpass us in power.”

Ning nodded. He had also been stunned by this recent fight. The Flamewing God’s flames alone would’ve been enough to roast him to death, while the Golden Emperors lived up to their reputation; Flamewing had unleashed everything it had but remained unable to harm Lord Wulf.

Ning was slowly beginning to understand that Flamewing had slightly more attack power than Otherverse Lords, but wasn’t capable of actually killing them! In terms of defensive strength, however, Flamewing was completely indestructible, and its strength was nearly limitless as well.

The Lonely King’s Sithe war machines allowed him to actually slay Otherverse Lords! And yet, he still wouldn’t be able to harm Flamewing in the slightest, and his defensive strength was merely on par with other Golden Emperors. Most importantly of all, he was unable to fight an extended battle. Much like how Realmslord Windgrace would expend an enormous amount of energy with each activation of the Blacksun, the Lonely King’s Sithe war machines also consumed a terrifying amount of energy.

Thus... even though some major powers clearly had greater attack power than a Chaos Primordial, they still remained completely unable to harm those creatures. Flamewing could slaughter all of the Lonely King’s subordinates with impunity, and the Lonely King would be able to do nothing but watch.

This battle truly had been quite stunning for everyone involved. Ji Ning, Azurefiend, Brightshore, Windrain, Netherlily... they were all Hegemonic

figures, and today they realized how terrifying the higher-level Otherverse Lords were. The others were also envious of the fact that Ning had actually managed to tame a Chaos Primordial.

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“Damnit.”

Multiple figures were scattered throughout the realmship. All of them were silent, and the golden humanoid was the first to speak and disrupt the deathly silence.

Lord Wulf stood there, his eyes cold and filled with murder. The air around him seemed to have frozen solid. He had never suffered a humiliating defeat like today's.

“General?” The other four looked at Lord Wulf.

“We definitely cannot just let things end here.” Lord Wulf gritted his teeth. “We have to invite his Majesty to help out.”

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Whooooosh. An endless aura of cold emanated out to cover the surrounding void.

A giant iceberg was hanging in the middle of the void, and the iceberg was filled with frozen mountain peaks. A figure was levitating in the air above the peak of one of those mountains.

This figure was seated on a giant levitating silver throne and dressed in beautiful silver robes. His hands, his neck, his face, and the other exposed parts of his body were all golden! The silver-robed golden humanoid sat there atop his throne, his arms resting against the throne's armrest. A blood-red gemstone was affixed to the middle of his forehead like a third eye, and it brimmed with might.

This man was staring into the distant void silently.

Everyone in the Icepeak Army knew that the Lonely King would often sit there by himself and stare off into the void. The Lonely King always had a cold look on his face, a look that inspired terror in those who saw him.

With but a thought, he could rescind the Golden Emperor and Black Emperor bodies of his subordinates, then give them over to others. Thus, all of the soldiers of the Icepeak Army were filled with dread towards him. They were terrified of incurring his displeasure.

The only time he ever revealed the hint of a smile was when he was engaged in battle and slaughter.

“Majesty.” A gray-robed figure flew over, then bowed respectfully.

The Lonely King turned his golden gaze across the gray figure. “You are Lord Wulf’s retainer?”

“I am,” the gray-robed figure said respectfully. “My true body has accompanied the general for many years now. Just now, I received orders from Lord Wulf to report some news of grave import to you, your Majesty.”

“Speak,” the Lonely King commanded calmly, his gaze focused upon the infinite void once more.

“This matter involves a Daolord known as Darknorth.” The gray-robed figure began to respectfully narrate the entire affair in detail, not exaggerating anything at all. He described things exactly as they had occurred.

The Lonely King listened to the entire story without interrupting a single time. When he heard that Ji Ning had the power of a Hegemon, his only response was a blink. It wasn’t until he heard the words ‘Chaos Primordial’ that he turned to look at the gray-robed figure.

“A Chaos Primordial?” The Lonely King murmured softly, “And who does it serve? Waveshift?”

“No. Lord Wulf said that he saw Daolord Darknorth issue an order to the Chaos Primordial. He said, ‘Flamewing, kill them all’,” the gray-robed figure replied. “This Chaos Primordial should therefore be named ‘Flamewing’, and its master should be Daolord Darknorth.”

“This Chaos Primordial’s master is Daolord Darknorth?” The Lonely King’s lips curved upwards slightly.

He was smiling.

This scene inspired terror in the gray-robed Emperor. Whenever he saw the Lonely King smile, he felt a sense of terror.

“Good. It is good that he serves a Daolord.” The Lonely King nodded slowly, seeming to be quite pleased.

“Lord Wulf said that he lost five Black Emperors,” the gray-robed figure said hurriedly. “What should we do? We’re waiting for your orders, Majesty.”

“Let bygones be bygones. Let this matter come to an end,” the Lonely King said calmly.

“Then what of our five slain Black Emperors?” the gray-robed figure asked.

“If they died, they died.” The Lonely King remained quite calm and indifferent. “Let this matter come to an end. This ‘Daolord Darknorth’ deserves his reputation as an unbelievable genius. He now has a Chaos Primordial at his beck and call... and most Daolords are madmen! Best not to fight against this Daolord Darknorth. If we fight against him and he orders his Chaos Primordial to attack our base, who can withstand it?”

The gray-robed figure continued to listen obediently.

“Send my response to Lord Wulf. He and his subordinates are to be stationed permanently in the Flamedragon Realmverse!” A hint of anticipation was in the Lonely King’s eyes. “Let him wait and collect every bit of information he can find about Daolord Darknorth. Once he receives word that Daolord Darknorth has failed his Daomerge, have him notify me.”

“Understood,” the gray-robed figure said respectfully.

“Remember! From this day forth, you are not to antagonize Daolord Darknorth. Do not speak to me of him until he fails his Daomerge,” the Lonely King commanded. “Now go.”

The gray-robed figure bowed respectfully, then immediately departed.

The Lonely King continued to sit there atop his levitating silver throne, staring quietly into the void. A hint of anticipation was within his eyes. “So its master is a Daolord? Daolords have such short lives. Once the Daolord dies, it’ll be time for the creature to accept a new master.”

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The Hiddenfiend Realmverse. The Blacksun.

Realmslord Windgrace had received the reports from Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Windrain, and Hegemon Netherlily.

“A Chaos Primordial? And its master is Daolord Darknorth?” The disheveled-looking old man walked out of his little courtyard, his eyes brighter than ever.

“So one of the legendary Chaos Primordials has appeared.” Realmslord Windgrace immediately barked, “On my orders, ensure that no news regarding the Chaos Primordial is divulged to outsiders. All Hegemons within the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, as well as the visiting Hegemons and Emperors, are all under strict orders to not spread this information to anyone.”

“Yes, Master,” the two nearby disciples both said respectfully.

Realmslord Windgrace mused softly, “Once word spreads, even more of those old fellows will be drawn over here. Daolords have such short lives. Once this Daolord dies... if he issued an order for the Chaos Primordial to follow another, it would quickly come to accept its new master.”

“Master, the Lonely King should be aware of this matter as well,” Hegemon Wuye said.

“I know the Lonely King. He would never divulge this information to others.” Realmslord Windgrace shook his head. “As for what happens when Darknorth fails his Daomerge... if the Lonely King tries to fight with me over it, he’ll learn that he cannot beat me. Hmph!”

Chapter 19: All Grows Calm Again

“Master, what should we do next?” Hegemon Wuye said softly. He had once been one of Realmslord Windgrace’s least remarkable students, but in the end he had become the most successful. Hegemon Wuye looked rather foolish, but how could a Hegemon who devoted his life to analyzing Sithe golems possibly be foolish? At critical times like this, he was able to maintain a level of incredible calm. Wuye knew that the question of who the Chaos Primordial belonged to was a question which would impact his own master’s status.

Unlike Daolord Darknorth, his master was going to be around for an extremely long period of time. Daolord Darknorth had a limited lifespan, while his master had won eternity for himself. If he could also tame a Chaos Primordial, then his status in the vast Chaosverse would rise up once more to new heights. The Lonely King would no longer be on the same level as him.

“Do nothing at all.” Realmslord Windgrace shook his head. “There’s no need for us to try and force things. Daolord Darknorth is an intelligent man. He has his own plans.”

“Alright.” Wuye nodded.

“The more you try to force something, the less likely it will work out as you hoped. The only result would be that Daolord Darknorth might feel a sense of enmity towards us. The Lonely King’s subordinates have already caused the seeds of enmity to be sown between him and Darknorth. Based on my understanding of his personality, he’s definitely going to try and force things...” Realmslord Windgrace smiled. “We cannot try to rush this matter. We must be patient. Daolord Darknorth has to willingly hand over control. Once he fails his Daomerge, he’s eventually going to have to come to a decision about what he will do.”

The nearby Emperor Skylight asked, “Master, what if Daolord Darknorth succeeds in his Daomerge?”

“Succeeds?” Realmslord Windgrace laughed. “He trains in an Omega

Dao. I once heard from an Autarch that there has never been a Daolord who has successfully completed the Daomerge for an Omega Dao! If he does succeed, he'll reach such a terrifyingly high level of power that he'll probably be far stronger than even the Chaos Primordial. By then, the Chaos Primordial won't matter; what would matter would be Darknorth himself."

Hegemon Wuye and Hegemon Skylight couldn't help but begin to silently speculate as to how powerful an Omega Dao Emperor would be!

"Stop thinking about it. The cultivator civilizations of the vast Chaosverse have given birth to a number of Autarchs, but it has never given birth to so much as a single Omega Dao Emperor." Realmslord Windgrace shook his head. "His chances of success are very, very low."

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Since Realmslord Windgrace had issued orders, everyone in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance immediately moved to obey.

In truth, realmverses were all extremely distant from each other. It was quite difficult for news to spread across multiple realmverses, and the only ones within the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance who were capable of contacting the outside world were the Hegemon-class Emperors. So long as they kept their mouths shut, there was no way word would spread.

But as for within the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance? Word had already spread! Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Windrain, and Hegemon Netherlily had only managed to contact Realmslord Windgrace by going through several other Hegemons and Emperors! They didn't have Primaltwins or avatars in the Blacksun, and so they had to convey their messages through others, who then conveyed the message to Emperor Skylight to give to Realmslord Windgrace.

Given how many had been informed, word naturally began to spread within the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance.

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A realmship suddenly appeared at the borders between the Flamedragon

Realmverse and the Great Dark. This was the realmship which Hegemon Thunderstar commanded. Within it were a total of six figures. One was a golden humanoid, four were onyx humanoids, and the final figure was a violet-robed, violet-haired man.

They were Lord Wulf of the Icepeak Army, four Black Emperors, and Hegemon Thunderstar, respectively.

“Swear the oath right away.” Lord Wulf cast the violet-robed, violet-haired man a cold look.

“Sure, sure.” Hegemon Thunderstar immediately smiled. “I would never dare to go against the Lonely King’s orders. I, Thunderstar, swear on my very life itself...” Hegemon Thunderstar had been forced to swear an oath not to divulge any information regarding the Chaos Primordial known as the Flamewing God.

“You can leave now.” Lord Wulf tossed out a storage-type magic treasure, then left alongside his four Black Emperors.

Whoosh. The realmship quickly departed, leaving Lord Wulf and his four Black Emperors at the borders of the Great Dark.

“General?”

“Are we really supposed to just swallow this crap?” The four Black Emperors remained unwilling to accept this. They had just suffered a huge loss; were they to take this lying down? The Icepeak Army would generally launch frenzied reprisals against any who dared to challenge them! This was why the Lonely King had gone so far as to kill three Otherverse Lords.

“You already know what his Majesty has commanded,” Lord Wulf said coldly. “What his Majesty commands, we shall carry out! Right now, his Majesty doesn’t care about this ‘Daolord Darknorth’; the only thing he cares about is that Chaos Primordial. If he can take control of it in the future, then our Icepeak Army shall become far more powerful than it is right now.”

When the four Black Emperors thought back to how terrifying the Flamewing God had been, they couldn’t help but shudder.

“In the coming days, we shall remain hidden within the Flamedragon Realmverse and keep a close watch on Daolord Darknorth. We shall wait for him to fail his Daomerge.”

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The news that a Chaos Primordial had appeared was like a bomb exploding within the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance! It shocked all of the Hegemons and Emperors. As for the Lonely King and Realmslord Windgrace, they just waited quietly. Both of them were waiting for Ning to fail his Daomerge.

“Let’s go.” A vile, blood-robed elder who radiated a reeking aura of blood stood there in the air. He let out a sigh. Behind him was an entire host of evil Emperors.

“Are we... are we really going to just leave like this?” The Emperors were rather unwilling to go.

“We lost.” The blood-robed Emperor shook his head. “Daolord Darknorth has survived many attempts against his life, and he now has both a Hegemon retainer and a Chaos Primordial. There’s no way we can possibly be a match for him. If we stay in the Flamedragon Realmverse... given his influence and power, we’ll probably be wiped out soon.”

“Now... our only chance for survival lies in departing from the Flamedragon Realmverse,” the blood-robed elder said.

“Let us go our separate ways and begin to wander through the Great Dark. Only by leaving can we survive.” The blood-robed elder let out a sigh. “I, Bloodcloud, simply am not strong enough. I feel ashamed.”

Whoosh. The legendary Emperor Bloodcloud, a man who had reached the Archon level of power, tore through spacetime and departed on his own.

The other Emperors traded glances with each other. All of them were truly unwilling to accept this. It would take them at least a million chaos cycles to travel another realmverse, after all. This would take an incredibly long period of time!

“In the end, there shall be other places in the chaosverse where we can live and thrive. Let us go.” The Emperors quickly came to the decision to depart. Singly and in small groups, they began to depart from the Flamedragon Realmverse and begin to wander through the Great Dark. Ji Ning had once sworn to slay every single one of the demons of Silksnow Palace. How could they possibly dare to remain here any longer?

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Vastheaven Palace.

By now, Hegemon Brightshore and the others had departed. Now, Emperor Waveshift had come to bid Ning farewell as well.

“Big brother Waveshift, you are leaving as well?” Ning was rather surprised and unwilling to part from him.

“The main reason I came back was to see just what new power has arisen within my homeland. Now that I know it is the Flamewing God and have met with you, Darknorth, I’m satisfied.” Emperor Waveshift smiled. “I have other business to attend to in the outside world.”

Ning nodded.

“Now that you have Flamewing under your control, the only ones you need to keep an eye out for are two people. One is the Lonely King of the Icepeak Army, and the other is Realmslord Windgrace.” Emperor Waveshift smiled. “The Lonely King’s temperament is a bit too bloodthirsty, and in comparison he isn’t quite as experienced as the Realmslord. He was simply someone who was lucky enough to find a Sithe armory and thus rose to power! Realmslord Windgrace is different. He rendered great merits during the Dawn War and has been guided by multiple Autarchs. He has seen far more things, and as a result he has chosen to be low-key.”

“It’s hard to predict what Realmslord Windgrace will do. If you do fail the Daomerge, you can entrust your final wishes to Realmslord Windgrace. That old man is quite trustworthy,” Emperor Waveshift said.

Ning was slightly startled by this.

“Of course, I hope you succeed in the Daomerge.” Emperor Waveshift let out a long sigh. “You’ve only seen a tiny fraction of what the Chaosverse holds; you haven’t even left the Flamedragon Realmverse! Countless marvels are waiting for you, and there are countless secrets waiting for you to uncover them. Darknorth, I truly do hope that you succeed in the Daomerge. When you do, I’ll ride your coat-tails and have you take me to some places I would never dare to visit on my own.”

Ning said with some surprise, “Countless marvels are awaiting me?”

“You’ve barely visited any places.” Emperor Waveshift shook his head.

“I’ve visited an alternate universe before!” Ning said. “And also many places here in the Flamedragon Realmverse.”

“As I said, you’ve barely visited any places. Otherverses are created by Autarchs for amusement, and they hold nothing special within them,” Emperor Waveshift said. “The Chaosverse... now THAT is truly something. Even the Sithe were nothing more than part of the Chaosverse. Only those who truly understand how marvelous the Chaosverse is will know how tiny they themselves are!

“This is why Realmslord Windgrace, who has served and followed Autarchs in the past, is such a low-key figure, while the short-sighted and ignorant Lonely King is so arrogant and brash. His only claim to fame stems from those Sithe war machines. In terms of real power, those Otherverse Lords who managed to merge their heartforce, divine power, and Immortal energy together are the truly terrifying figures of the Chaosverse. They truly do stand at the very peak of power, save for the Autarchs.”

Chapter 20: Regret

Ji Ning nodded as well. If an Otherverse Lord managed to merge all of his types of energy together, he would truly become a force to reckoned with.

Ning had received legacies from over three hundred Hegemons, with God Emperor Helong being one of them. God Emperor Helong had been an Otherverse Lord who had created the [God Emperor's Apocalypse] technique, a technique akin to the [Heartsword] art. As a result, he had been far more powerful than most Otherverse Lords, and was strong enough to fight Chaos Primordials head-on with his own power.

“However... on the other hand, Sithe war machines come in varying levels of power as well. The Lonely King has multiple war machines and is capable of slaying ordinary Otherverse Lords and destroy entire otherverses.” Emperor Waveshift nodded. “Although he is rather short-sighted, he’s still not someone to trifle with. Sithe war machines are simply terrifying to behold. You need to be wary of him.”

“I understand.” Ning nodded.

“Train hard and succeed in the Daomerge.” Emperor Waveshift looked at Ning. “The Chaosverse holds far too many marvels which you have yet to see. For example, the most stunning sight I’ve ever seen is a Sithe Exalt who is kept in perpetual imprisonment. That terrifying presence he had... even though I only saw his blurred outlines from afar, I still felt completely shaken. Well, that’s enough of that. Here’s a treasure for you.”

Emperor Waveshift suddenly waved his hand, causing a cube-shaped treasure to appear within it. He gently flicked this crystalline cube over towards Ning. “All you have to do is shatter it, and I’ll be able to sense it.” Emperor Waveshift looked at Ning. “I’ll then head back to the Flamedragon Realmverse at top speed.”

“Thank you.” Ning felt rather moved.

“I feel like we are old friends, even though we have just met.” Emperor Waveshift let out a sigh. He scanned the area with his gaze, then used his

Immortal energy to block the sound of their voices from the outside world. “Before I leave, there’s one more thing I need to tell you.”

When Ning saw how cautious Emperor Waveshift was, to the point of not even wanting Flamewing or Azurefiend to overheard the conversation, Ning couldn’t help but feel rather surprised.

“In recent days, I secretly used all the power and skill I had to engage in Numerancy divination on your behalf,” Emperor Waveshift said.

Ning’s heart lurched.

“Your Daomerge... it will have a tremendous impact on the world. Even though I did everything I could, I was still only able to see a tiny amount.” Emperor Waveshift looked at Ning. He elected not to mention the fact that he had used up an incredibly important treasure to carry out this divination; otherwise, he wouldn’t have been able to see anything at all.

“You saw a tiny amount?” Ning listened carefully.

“A tiny, blurry amount.” Emperor Waveshift nodded. “All I can say is... I saw nothing but darkness!”

“What do you mean?” Ning’s face paled slightly.

“It means that there was no life at all!” Emperor Waveshift shook his head. “Based on what I saw just now... you will definitely fail your Daomerge!”

“Are you absolutely certain?” Ning found it hard to accept this.

“Don’t be hasty or disheartened. Remember... the Dao of Numerancy involves divination and probability, not ironclad prophecy; nothing is fixed! The future is always filled with infinite possibilities,” Emperor Waveshift said. “Thus... you need to seize every single possibility, every single bit of karmic luck. You have to fight for every scrap of every chance, for every treasure and every legacy you can find. Do everything you can to improve your chances... because if you do not, you will fail.”

“If you do your utmost, perhaps you may stand a chance.” Emperor Waveshift looked at Ning. “That’s all I have to say. I’m going to leave

now." After speaking, Emperor Waveshift turned and departed into the skies.

Waves of emotion were rocking through Ning's heart. He had felt certain that he had reached a sufficiently high level of insight into the Dao. He never would've imagined that Emperor Waveshift's divinations would suggest that he had no chance whatsoever at succeeding.

"He's right. If I want to succeed in the Daomerge for an Omega Dao, I truly do have to do everything I can. I can't let myself relax in the slightest." Ning nodded slowly.

"Master, has Waveshift departed?" Flamewing sauntered over lazily.

"He left." Ning nodded. "Life shall become rather peaceful and uneventful for a time. No one will come to disturb us."

Ning was planning to continue his training. He had multiple other Daos he needed to train to the Archon level, so as to fulfill the requirements Autarch Awakener had laid down. That would allow him to gain a treasure which the Autarch had left behind, a treasure which the Autarch had believed to be supremely useful for the Daomerge. He absolutely had to acquire that treasure.

"So there's nothing else to do for now?" Azurefiend asked. "Darknorth, are you planning to remain in secluded meditation here at Vastheaven Palace?"

"Yes." Ning nodded. "However, before I go into secluded meditation, I'm planning to pay a visit to the Jadefire Realm. There's still a Hegemon imprisoned there."

"Winterflame!" Azurefiend's eyes lit up.

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By now, the only person remaining in the flaming passageways of the Jadefire Realm was Hegemon Winterflame.

The silver-robed and devilishly handsome Hegemon Winterflame was seated in the lotus position within a flaming passageway. He was quite

patient, and ever since he had ended negotiations with Daolord Darknorth he had begun to wait. He was waiting for Daolord Darknorth to fail his Daomerge, at which time he would stand a chance at surviving and escaping.

“What?! A Chaos Primordial?!” Hegemon Winterflame’s face turned completely pale. “Impossible! That’s absolutely impossible.” A look of terror was in his eyes. He finally began to panic, and it was impossible for him to remain calm any further.

By now, the entire Sixteen Realmverses Alliance was frothing after receive word that Daolord Darknorth had tamed a Chaos Primordial. Hegemon Winterflame’s avatar was in the outside world and he thus received word of it as well. To the other Hegemons and Daolords, this was nothing more than a bit of entertaining news... but to Hegemon Winterflame, it was a sudden pronouncement of doom!

He had always been a vicious and unscrupulous man, which was why he had planned on kidnapping everyone in Vastheaven Palace to threaten Ning. He had even battled against Ning’s avatar, and Hegemon Brightshore had to intervene to stop him.

In the end, he had been unwilling to completely accede to Ning’s demands within the flaming passageway. He wanted to await for the day that Daolord Darknorth failed his Daomerge and perished, and so he had been waiting... but who would’ve imagined that this terrifying news of a Chaos Primordial would suddenly descend upon him?

“Is this real? The Chaos Primordial is named the ‘Flamewing God’, and he easily butchered five Black Emperors of the Icepeak Army? Lord Wulf of the Icepeak Army was beaten so badly he had to flee in terror?” The more Hegemon Winterflame heard, the more terrified he became. If even Black Emperors had been slain, how could he, Winterflame, pose any threat to the creature at all?

“How could this have happened? He’s just a Daolord! H-how is this possible? I-I... I’ve always been so careful.” Hegemon Winterflame was rather dazed. He had never been so foolish as to make an enemy out of

any truly formidable figures. Although he was unscrupulous and capable of anything, causing many to hate him, he had still been able to remain alive.

Alas... if one always walks by the riverside, sooner or later one's shoes would get wet! Daolords were usually nothing more than bugs to be crushed... but this time, one of them had just given him a huge 'surprise'.

"N-no... I can't accept this..." Hegemon Winterflame's face turned completely red as countless thoughts flitted through his mind. He asked for more and more information from those in the outside world before, finally, he gave up.

"Flee!" Hegemon Winterflame's eyes were bloodshot. "I have to flee! Since Daolord Darknorth is now fighting against the Icepeak Army, his true body isn't present. Perhaps the Jadefire Realm is unguarded for now." Hegemon Winterflame felt a thin tendril of hope.

Swoosh! He immediately transformed into a streak of white fire and began to flee.

"It really is safe now." Hegemon Winterflame flew for several seconds without activating any traps. He immediately felt a sense of delight. "Daolord Darknorth must have left. There's no one in control of the Jadefire Realm."

BOOM! Right at this moment, a wave of terrifying power swept towards him with terrifying destructive power. Hegemon Winterflame immediately retreated in a blind panic, but the flame still split his body in half.

Slash! After putting up a struggle, half of his flaming body was completely destroyed by that wave of power. The other half quickly reformed into Hegemon Winterflame's appearance. His face was ashen, and a look of horror was in his eyes. He had very nearly died just now.

"Hegemon Winterflame. On Master's commands, I've been watching over you." A voice boomed out, echoing within every part of the surrounding area.

Hegemon Winterflame lifted up his head to scan the surrounding area, a

feeling of dread in his heart.

“You were pretty lucky this time, but next time you are dead meat. The flaming passageways are quite long. You’ll have to fly for very, very long before you can escape them. You survived the first time, but I refuse to believe you’ll survive a second and third time,” the cold voice said. This was the Emperor-class golem which Ning had ordered to remain here and watch over this place.

“Y-you...” Hegemon Winterflame was panicking. He called out loudly, “Is your master Daolord Darknorth? Hurry up and help me send word to him. Let him know that I’ll accept his terms. I’ll give him all of my treasures, including my armor and my Universe weapon. I’m willing to offer all of them to Daolord Darknorth, so long as he is willing to let me go and spare my life.”

“Hmph. So NOW you choose to beg for your life?” the cold voice boomed out.

“Just hurry up and tell your master!” Hegemon Winterflame said frantically. “I don’t want to be enemies with him!”

“Just wait. He will be arriving soon,” the cold voice replied.

Chapter 21: Of Little Use

A realmship appeared within a spatial tear outside the Jadefire Realm.

“And here we are.” Ji Ning stared at the vast blazing whirlpool of blazing flames and smiled: “Hegemon Winterflame has probably heard the news by now.”

“He definitely has.” A look of excitement was on Azurefiend’s old face, and his eyes were gleaming. “Based on my understanding of him... he’s probably scared out of his mind. He might immediately beg for mercy once you arrive, Darknorth.”

“Let’s go and take a look.” Ning was looking forward to seeing that panicked look on Hegemon Winterflame’s face. In the past, Winterflame had always behaved in an arrogant and domineering manner.

Whoosh. The realmship flew into the Jadefire Realm at high speeds, descending into the flaming passageways.

“Master.” A voice rang out from the surrounding area. This was the voice of the Emperor-class golem in control of the flaming passageways.

“Is Winterflame still in the same old position?” Ning asked.

“Master,” the voice rang out, “Hegemon Winterflame attempted to flee, but I took control over the mechanisms in accordance with your orders and nearly killed him. This frightened Hegemon Winterflame so badly that he no longer dared to flee again, and he’s very close to where he originally started.”

“He actually tried to flee?” Azurefiend grinned and said, “He finally knows the meaning of fear. He has an invulnerable form, which means that even though I am a bit stronger than him I cannot kill him... but now that we have Flamewing, killing him will be simplicity itself. If he tries to run, the mechanisms in the flaming passageways are also capable of claiming his life! Both fleeing and not-fleeing will both spell doom. Haha, I’m looking forward to seeing that look on his stupid face!”

Ning laughed as well. He also felt delighted! After they flew for a period

of time, they finally saw Hegemon Winterflame. Hegemon Winterflame was seated in the lotus position in the void. He still looked as devilishly handsome as ever, but his aura was rather chaotic.

“Eh?” Hegemon Winterflame turned his head as the distant realmship approached him. He hurriedly rose to his feet.

Four figures flew out of the realmship, with the leader being the white-robed youth with a black sheath on his back. Next to him was the chubby Flamewing and Hegemon Azurefiend, with Protector Whitethaw standing behind them all.

“I greet you, Daolord Darknorth,” Hegemon Winterflame said. His attitude was very humble, and he cast Flamewing a glance as he spoke. Flamewing was chomping through some food he was holding as he glanced sideways at Winterflame as well. Winterflame couldn’t help but feel as though he himself was being devoured bit-by-bit, and his mental state grew even more chaotic.

“Hah! Look at how respectful our dear Hegemon Winterflame is being.” Azurefiend roared with laughter as he clutched his sides: “He’s being as humble as a servant! Last time we saw him, he was quite arrogant and proud, no? Winterflame, do you remember the final words you said to us when we last met?”

Hegemon Winterflame’s face was ashen as Azurefiend continued to speak: “I think you’ve forgotten, but I haven’t. I recall it all quite clearly. Watch, Winterflame!” Azurefiend waved his hand, causing an illusory image to appear next to them. This was the scene of their previous meeting, and in the illusory images Winterflame was snarling with hatred as he roared, “Let’s see if you die first or if I die first!”

Winterflame gritted his teeth.

“Enough, Azurefiend,” Ning said.

“Fine.” Azurefiend fell silent as instructed.

Winterflame relaxed slightly. Although he was completely unscrupulous, as a Hegemon he still cared about face. He felt miserable suffering such

mockery from Azurefiend. Upon hearing Ning order Azurefiend to halt, he was suddenly filled with hope. Perhaps Daolord Darknorth wasn't going to hold a grudge and would release him?

"He's about to die soon. There's no need to go too far." Ning's voice rang out once more, and Winterflame's face instantly turned bone-white.

"DAOLORD DARKNORTH!!!" Hegemon Winterflame let out a throat-rending howl. Even Ning was badly startled by the grief and rage in Hegemon Winterflame's voice.

"Daolord Darknorth, I was wrong! It was all my fault! I was being too arrogant and ruthless." Hegemon Winterflame stared at Ning, then said in a begging manner, "I know I made a huge mistake. I beg you to give me a chance, Daolord Darknorth. Everyone should be given a chance. Give me one!"

"In your dreams," Azurefiend muttered.

Hegemon Winterflame gritted his teeth. "I'm willing to be your retainer. So long as you spare my life, I'll serve you."

Ning just watched quietly, while Azurefiend chuckled: "Didn't you look down at me for becoming his retainer?"

"I'd be honored to be given the chance to serve Daolord Darknorth as his retainer," Hegemon Winterflame said hurriedly. Upon seeing that Ning appeared completely unmoved, he began to panic even further. "I'm willing to be an eternal retainer. Even if you fail your Daomerge and die, Daolord Darknorth, I'd be willing to swear an oath to follow your orders to the end of my days. Uh, I don't mean to suggest that I hope you will fail the Daomerge, Daolord Darknorth. I obviously hope that you will succ—"

Halfway through his babbling, Ning suddenly shook his head. "Flamewing, get rid of him."

"Haha, I was waiting for you to say that!" Flamewing let out a strange howl, transforming into his normal form of a giant blazing winged bear as he charged straight towards Hegemon Winterflame.

Hegemon Winterflame had a terrified look on his face, but moments

later it was replaced by a look of savagery. He glared at the distant Ning with a hate-filled look in his eyes, then howled, “Daolord Darknorth, you’ll die too! You’ll die too!”

Riiiiip. Flamewing destroyed everything in its path with its overwhelming power. Even though Hegemon Winterflame was able to transform into a sea of fire, he was still extinguished by the Chaos Primordial’s might. Nothing was left save a few scattered treasures.

Azurefiend shook his head when he saw this. “Darknorth, Winterflame was still a Hegemon. Taking him on as a retainer wasn’t a bad idea. I thought you’d choose to accept him in the end.”

Ning stared at the scattered treasures floating in the air. “I did briefly consider taking him on as a retainer, but... for some reason, he just disgusted me far too much. I already have the three of you; an extra Hegemon retainer really wouldn’t make much of a difference. Better to keep my surroundings clear of such filth.”

Azurefiend was speechless. He never would’ve imagined that Ning would have declined a Hegemonic retainer for a reason like this.

“Let’s go.” Ning had already made certain plans for the Three Realms. By now, Hegemon Winterflame truly was of little use to him, as Ning simply wouldn’t trust a Hegemon like Winterflame to watch over the Three Realms.

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Hegemon Winterflame died, and his avatar perished alongside him. This news quickly spread throughout the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance.

The Hegemons and Emperors of the alliance all knew long ago that Hegemon Winterflame had been trapped within the flaming passageways. They all suspected that the killer was Daolord Darknorth, the controller of the Jadefire Realm! All of them couldn’t help but feel a lingering sense of dread towards him. They knew that Daolord Darknorth was not the benevolent, merciful type... and they secretly celebrated the fact that they handed over their treasures and had been able to leave the Jadefire Realm safely.

And so, the Hegemons and Emperors of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance now feared a total of two people. The first was Realmslord Windgrace, while the second was the monstrously talented Daolord who had tamed the Flamewing God – Daolord Darknorth. These two people were mighty enough to cause even Hegemons to fear the approach of death.

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Ning didn't really care about what was happening in the outside world. His focus was on cultivation. He had to come up with those ten Archon-class techniques as soon as possible, so that he could earn the precious reward which Autarch Awakener had left behind. Even the Autarch viewed that treasure as valuable and not to be casually handed over to others.

According to the estate-spirit, this treasure was the number one most helpful cultivation treasure in all the Chaosverse, and it was number one in assisting during Daomerges as well!

Ning absolutely had to acquire such a supreme treasure. The Daomerge for the Omega Dao would be incredibly difficult; even Emperor Waveshift said that he saw no hope at all for Ning in attempting it. In addition, the path of the Omega Dao was the only path available for Ning if he wished to revive Yu Wei. Only through this path would he have a chance to surpass the Autarchs and take back Yu Wei's truesoul fragments from the prime essences of the Chaosverse.

Of course, it was highly likely that he would fail and perish... but he still had to do his absolute utmost!

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Time flowed on.

Vastheaven Palace. Within Darknorth's estate. Ning was seated by himself in quiet meditation atop a mountain. Next to him was a hot stove that had a flagon of wine atop it, while there was some snow on the boulder nearby.

Ning's Primaltwin remained in secluded meditation atop the Autarch's stone dais, while Ning's true body lived a fairly relaxed life. This dichotomy of harsh training and relaxedness actually caused many insights to flicker through Ning's mind. He broke through a number of bottlenecks in this way.

"I've finally reached the Archon level in the final Dao, the Dao of Earth." The white-robed Ning's eyebrows were covered in snow. He suddenly opened his eyes to stare at the nearby flagon of wine. This wine had been kept warm for an extremely long period of time, because Ning only permitted himself a single drink of wine when he finished completing a Dao. Thus, it had been countless years since he had last drank from the wine.

"Now, all ten techniques have been developed." An eager look was in Ning's eyes. "I wonder what sort of precious treasure Autarch Awakener has left behind for me?"

Chapter 22: Stonefire Pearl

Within the Azureflower Estate.

The black-robed Ji Ning was seated in the lotus position atop the stone dais. He had already been in this position for more than ten chaos cycles without moving at all.

“Success.” The black-robed Ning suddenly opened his eyes and smiled. He waved his hand, causing a series of jade slips to appear next to him. Ning had filled every single one of the jade slips with all sorts of techniques which he had devised over the course of many years. Although only ten chaos cycles had gone past in the real world, he had spent that entire period of time under 100x temporal acceleration. In other words, for him over a thousand chaos cycles had already gone by.

Ning had come up with a total of ten Archon-class techniques. These techniques were based on his Omega Sword Dao, his heartforce illusions, the Dao of Fire, the Dao of Water, the Dao of Lightning, the Dao of Space, the Dao of Formations, the Dao of Metal, the Dao of Wood, and the Dao of Earth. There were ten Daos in total.

After slaughtering Hegemon Winterflame, Ning had chosen to work in simpler Daos such as that of Metal, Wood, and Earth, so that he would more quickly acquire the treasure reward. He personally wanted to study the Dao of Time, but judging from how he had spent more than two hundred chaos cycles working on the Dao of Space, he felt likely that he would need to spend even more time on Time.

In the end, he was a sword cultivator. As a result, he was quite quick with the Dao of Metal, making his breakthrough in just twenty or so chaos cycles. He wasn’t very talented in the Dao of Wood, and so he spent more than fifty chaos cycles on it. As for the final member of the Five Elements, ‘Earth’? Thanks to the fact that he had already mastered the first four, he had actually managed to complete his mastery of it in just ten or so chaos cycles.

In just ninety ‘real’ chaos cycles (9000 chaos cycles for him), he had

actually managed to create three Archon-class techniques.

“Senior,” the black-robed Ning called out. The distant white-haired elder, also seated in the lotus position, slowly opened his eyes.

“Senior, you already know about my Omega Sword Dao and my illusions. Here are the other eight techniques.” Ning pointed at the eight slips levitating in the air behind him. “Please take a look at them.” The eight jade slips all floated over to the white-haired man.

“That fast?” The white-haired old man’s eyes lit up as he immediately stared at the eight slips. After analyzing them, he nodded: “Not bad. You’ve mastered all five of the Five Elements, and you actually made tremendous progress in even the Dao of Formations. You truly do have an incredibly high level of comprehension of the Dao. In truth, just judging from how quickly you were able to create your Omega Sword Dao and then reach the Fourth Step as a Daolord, I felt certain that your comprehension skills were exceptional. However, I still had to obey my master’s orders.”

“Of course.” Ning nodded. In truth, one’s comprehension skills could change. For example, even the most ‘talented’ of newborns wouldn’t be able to comprehend much. The many experiences you went through in life would mold you like metal in a forge, either breaking you or making you stronger, harder, and more dazzling. Ning’s heart had been completely focused on the Dao of the Sword, and he had experienced many exceptional things before reaching his current heights. Now that he had reached the fourteenth stance of the [Heartsword], his heart and his will were both incredibly pure, allowing him to train even more quickly than before.

“You’ve created ten techniques, which means I can give that treasure which Master left behind.” The white-haired old man waved his hand. Whoosh. The hall suddenly seemed to ripple as rays of light appeared, causing a tiny fist-sized space to appear at the very center of the room. After this tiny space appeared, one could vaguely make out two objects levitating within it.

The first object was a completely round and slick pearl. It looked to be roughly the size of an egg, and it emanated incorporeal ripples that could be seen with the naked eye. Ning could sense the waves of power sweeping across him, causing him to feel more relaxed and comfortable than he ever had before. He felt almost like a child in his mother's embrace; that was how incredibly warm and soothing this felt.

The second object was also round, but it was covered with countless lines and runes.

"Come here." The white-haired man waved his hand, causing both objects to float over towards him. "Darknorth." The white-haired elder looked at Ning. "This first treasure was named by my master and the Autarchs as the 'Stonefire Pearl'. All of them concur that it had to be a naturally-occurring treasure manifested by the Chaosverse, and that it is the number one most helpful cultivation treasure. Master focused all of his efforts on completing the Nine Chaos Seals, and so he found these types of treasures to be invaluable. As a result, he paid a fairly significant price to convince the other Autarchs to let him have it."

Ning was shocked. So Autarch Awakener had personally used this treasure in the past?

"Let me tell you about its history." The white-haired elder laughed. "Our story begins when the Sithe were at the prime of their power. They had yet to launch the great war against the cultivator civilizations, but my master and the others were already secretly on guard against them, keeping a vigilant eye on them at all times. One time, Master and the others suddenly sensed a hint of danger appear and so they hurriedly joined forces to go to that location. They discovered that the Sithe had captured and were escorting a strange stone lifeform who was completely covered in flames. My Master and the others did not hesitate at all; they immediately attacked! The Sithe either fled or died. As for the 'stonefire' lifeform? It was actually on par with my Master and the other Autarchs in might!"

"On par with Autarchs?!" Ning was amazed. "The Sithe are actually in control of creatures with such power?"

“That creature probably wasn’t a Sithe. None of us know where the Sithe found the thing and how they took control over it,” the white-haired elder said. “Master and his peers spent tens of thousands of years battling it before it finally ran out of energy and died. As soon as the strange stonefire creature died, its body crumbled apart and revealed this pearl within it.”

“This pearl has marvelous properties and is of tremendous use to cultivators when training,” the white-haired elder said. “We found a total of just two creatures which had reached this level of power. One was this stonefire creature, the other was an iceberg creature that was also controlled by the Sithe and fought for them during the Dawn War. The Autarchs killed both of these creatures. I imagine they should know more about where these creatures came from, but they’ve never discussed it with me.”

Ning sighed in amazement. Living creatures who were on par with Autarchs in power? “Can the Sithe have created them?” Ning asked.

“Impossible. They were actual living beings,” the white-haired elder.

“Autarch Awakener didn’t provide any additional information about them?” Ning asked.

“No. He did once say that with the Sithe having been annihilated, these creatures will no longer be seen ever again,” the white-haired elder said.

Ning nodded, but he was still completely puzzled. Why was it that these terrifying creatures would no longer appear now that the Sithe were gone? Ning couldn’t help but sigh to himself. In the end, he simply hadn’t visited enough places. He hadn’t even seen a fraction of what Emperor Waveshift had seen, to say nothing of the Autarchs. He knew far too little about the vast Chaosverse.

“This Stonefire Pearl is now yours.” The white-haired elder handed it over to Ning while saying, “But of course, you are not allowed to give it to others. If you die in the future, it’ll fly back to the estate and await its next destined owner.”

“Fly back?” After accepting the pearl, Ning at first felt as though it was

rather cool. Soon, however, the warmth of his hand began to heat it up.

Ning sent his divine power into the pearl to investigate it. “Eh, it’s not a magic treasure?” Ning was surprised. This was just an ordinary item, not a magic treasure; how was he supposed to bind and use it?

“This is a natural treasure. All you need to do is to send a strand of your godsense into it and you’ll be able to activate it,” the white-haired elder said. “This estate also holds the stonfire creature’s corpse within it. If no one is in control of the pearl, it’ll pass through spacetime and then come back.”

“How incredible.” Ning was shocked.

“The Autarchs destroyed the stonfire creature and shattered its bodies into tiny bits, but the Stonefire Pearl would fly back towards the shattered bits of its body and quickly bring it back to life.” The white-haired elder laughed. “In the end, Master and the others had to destroy its soul and truesoul before it stopped trying to revive itself. By now, the corpse has been ensorcered by Master and remains suppressed in here, and so once you die, Darknorth, the Stonefire Pearl will come back to this place.”

Ning nodded. As soon as he had sent a strand of his godsense into the pearl, he was able to sense that it seemed to have become part of himself and had become completely one with him.

“Come in.” Ning willed the Stonefire Pearl to enter his body. A faint warmth spread throughout every part of him, and his soul and truesoul both felt incredibly at ease. When Ning attempted to meditate on the Dao of Time in this state, he immediately felt as though a wellspring of insights began to flow through his mind.

“This is incredibly useful for cultivation.” The white-haired elder smiled. “It is the number one cultivation treasure, which means it is naturally also the number one Daomerge treasure.”

Ning felt a sense of excitement in his heart. Hegemon Brightshore and the others had actively contested over Crimsonwave Temple’s fruits. Why? Because those fruits could be used to forge spirit-pills which when eaten would be of tremendous use for cultivation.

The Stonefire Pearl was the supreme cultivation treasure which had been used by Autarch Awakener himself, and the same was true for the stone dais. Now... both had been inherited by Ning.

"I'm sure you know what Master was hoping for when he left these things to you." The white-haired elder looked at Ning.

"I understand. Autarch Awakener's greatest wish was for the Nine Chaos Seals to be perfected," Ning said.

"Yes. This was his greatest regret in life."

The white-haired elder nodded, then gently waved a finger and caused the second floating sphere to fly over towards Ning as well.

Ning saw that this sphere was covered with countless runes and patterned lines which flowed across its surface. He immediately had the feeling that it was connected to the Nine Chaos Seals somehow. The white-haired elder explained, "This is the Heart of Eternity. It is covered with layers of runes, all of which must be deciphered and resolved. Darknorth, you should continuously work at solving these layers of runes. Once you've completely mastered all ninety-nine layers of runes which cover the Heart of Eternity, you will have reached Master's level of insight into the Nine Chaos Seals."

"But solving and comprehending the Heart of Eternity merely means you have reached his level in just a single aspect!" The white-haired elder looked at Ning. "My master's hope is that someone can improve this technique to the Eternal Emperor level, which was why he named this sphere the Heart of Eternity. Learning to solve it will be of some assistance to you in the Daomerge. Although the assistance will be fairly minimal, Master left behind a final treasure within the core of the Heart of Eternity. If you can fully solve it then the treasure inside it will be yours, and I can promise you that it is just as valuable as the Stonefire Pearl."

Ning felt both joy and sorrow. Autarch Awakener truly had spared no expense in trying to ensure that his 'heirs' would complete the Nine Chaos Seals. He had even gone so far as to seal away a treasure inside the Heart of Eternity! If someone wanted to acquire it, they would have to first

completely deconstruct the Heart of Eternity and reach Autarch Awakener's level of insight in the Nine Chaos Seals. This would truly require an enormous amount of effort.

Chapter 23: Difference

“Senior,” Ji Ning asked, “Might I ask what other external treasures exist in the Chaosverse which are of major benefit to someone attempting the Daomerge?”

Success in the Daomerge was a combination of two factors; internal and external. Internal referred to one’s self and one’s insights! Only if one reached a sufficiently high level of comprehension would one’s chances increase.

External factors referred to special treasures which would improve one’s chances, such as the Autarch’s stone dais or the Stonefire Pearl.

What Ning was attempting was something which had never been successfully carried out... a Daomerge in an Omega Dao! No one in the history of the entire Chaosverse had ever successfully done such a thing, and so he naturally had to both perfect himself as well as acquire all external sources of help he could find. That way, his chances at the Daomerge would improve slightly.

“External treasures?” The white-haired elder glanced at Ning in surprise, then pointed at the Autarch’s stone dais beneath Ning. “This serves as the core for the estate, and Master spent countless amounts of effort in forging it. You’ve already acquired a Stonefire Pearl as well, which is the essence core of a creature which was comparable to an Autarch in might. These were treasures which my master himself used to assist him in cultivation. With them, what other external treasures could you possibly want?!”

“I understand,” Ning said hurriedly. “The Autarch’s stone dais and the Stonefire Pearl are both tremendously helpful in cultivation. They will provide me with sustained, long-term benefits while I am training. What I was referring to just now is another type of external treasure, something akin to the ‘Voidsea Jadeseal’ or the ‘Nine Orifices Void Pill’, treasures which can generate an astonishing effect for a brief period of time.”

“Ahh.” The white-haired elder nodded. Many talented Daolords would

create magic altars and seek out special spirit-pills in preparation for their Daomerge. Those spirit-pills, when eaten, would cause the truesoul to be tremendously stimulated. As for the Voidsea Jadeseal, it actually allowed for a complete Daomerge simulation.

“You walk the path of the Omega Dao, and so there is no way to simulate your Daomerge,” the white-haired elder said. “As for special spirit-pills... they probably wouldn’t even be as useful as the state you are normally in when using the Autarch’s stone dais and the Stonefire Pearl.”

Ning immediately asked, “Isn’t there something particularly special which I could use?” Ning would go for anything and everything which was of use to him.

The white-haired old man pondered for a while, then said, “If you absolutely HAVE to have something... I do remember an incredible single-use Daomerge treasure which can instantly unleash a tremendous amount of power for an extremely brief period of time. Master once mentioned it briefly to me and described it as one of the top three treasures in its class!”

Ning’s eyes lit up upon hearing this.

“The number one treasure is known as the ‘Daomerge Firecloud Flower’. The second-ranked treasure is known as the ‘Incense Spirit-Fruit’. The third is known as the ‘Cloudworld Jade’.” The white-haired elder said resignedly, “But I’ve only heard of them because my master once chatted casually about them with other Autarchs. They didn’t speak in detail and so I know very little about them.”

“But Darknorth, these are all limited-time objects. Once you use them up, they are gone. They aren’t even close to being comparable to the stone dais or the Stonefire Pearl in value.” The white-haired elder shook his head. “And, I recall my master once saying that the Cloudworld Jade’s effect only lasts for roughly three months or so, but the effect is merely as strong as the Stonefire Pearl’s constant effect.”

“It can only be used for three months, while the Stonefire Pearl is constant and can be used long-term.” The white-haired elder looked at Ning. “Finding the Cloudworld Jade would be enormously difficult. Why

bother?"

Ning just silently memorized all of this information. There clearly was no reason to seek out the third-ranked treasure, the 'Cloudworld Jade'. The other two, however, were worth searching for. Anything that might increase his chances at the Daomerge by even a smidgeon was worth hunting for.

"Senior, where should I go to find these things?" Ning asked.

"No idea." The white-haired elder shook his head. "I never asked Master about them."

"Oh." Ning pondered for a moment. In the past, he had never even heard of 'Incense Spirit-Fruit' or 'Daomerge Firecloud Flower'. It seemed as though only truly experienced and worldly figures would know of them. A pity that he hadn't asked his big brother Waveshift about them! In all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, perhaps the most worldly figure outside of Emperor Waveshift was Realmslord Windgrace.

Realmslord Windgrace had served and been taught by more than one Autarch!

"Darknorth. I have to warn you," the white-haired elder said solemnly, "Treasures of such rarity are all extremely hard to find. Not even the Autarchs know everything there is to know about the vast Chaosverse! The technology of the Sithe, the two slain Autarch-level creatures... they are all testament to the fact that the Chaosverse holds many terrifying secrets within it. You are still just a Daolord; so what if you are strong? There are some truly dangerous places which would cause even Hegemons to fall, to say nothing of you."

"I understand." Ning nodded. However, since he had the Flamewing God he felt that he was still able to give it a good shot. Chaos Primordials were famous for its virtually indestructible body, after all.

"The Flamedragon Realmverse is nothing more than a tiny part of the Chaosverse. It is best for you to harbor a healthy fear of the universe," the white-haired elder said with a sigh. "I hope that you won't overestimate yourself prior to completing your Daomerge. If you succeed in it, you'll

probably become far more powerful than even an Otherverse Lord. You can go and wander the Chaosverse them; only then will you be assured of staying alive.”

“Thank you, senior.” Ning could sense that the estate-spirit remained worried, and so he quickly explained, “Actually, I’ve already tamed a Chaos Primordial.”

The white-haired elder instantly turned speechless. “You... wha...? Ahem. Well, enough of that.” The white-haired elder didn’t seem to know what to say, and so he immediately began to vanish into thin air. His voice echoed for one final time within the second hall: “Remember, for you to solve the Heart of Eternity is the one final wish my Master had. It will be of tremendous benefit to all cultivator civilizations as well.”

“I understand.” Ning nodded.

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The black-robed Ning was seated atop the Autarch’s stone dais, toying with the runed Heart of Eternity with his hands.

“Oh, Autarch Awakener...” Ning looked at the Heart of Eternity. “So this is your final wish, eh? But... my only wish is to complete the Daomerge and then become an Autarch in the future.” Ning’s heart was filled with mixed emotions.

His wish and Autarch Awakener’s wish... they involved heading down two different paths. Ever since they had gained victory in the Dawn War, the Autarchs had stood at the very apex of the universe and were without equal. As a result they were quite lonely, and they often searched for things to do. Autarch Bolin had created the Aeonians, while Autarch Awakener had spent his efforts on analyzing the Nine Chaos Seals and creating a type of cultivation technique similar to what the Sithe used.

The cultivation technique the Sithe used created something similar to the azureflower mist energy, but it was clearly even more profound. Alas, they were completely different types of living creatures than cultivators, and thus there was no way for cultivators to use their cultivation techniques.

Autarch Awakener put all of his efforts in creating something similar. If he truly succeeded, it would've benefited all cultivator civilizations. Alas, he was only able to at most create something which allowed for Daolords of the Fourth Step to convert their divine power and Immortal energy. There was no way to transform Emperor-class energy.

"Autarch Awakener, I'll give it a try. If I turn out to have incredible talent for this, I might be able to help you." Ning remained quite clear-minded. As a Daolord, his time was limited. There was no way he could spend all of it on researching the Nine Chaos Seals. But if it looked like he might somehow managed to succeed in a short period of time due to having an incredible affinity for it, he didn't mind spending that time.

"Break." Ning looked at the runes covering the sphere. Ning was able to break through the first layer of runes with ease.

"Break again." Ning was at an incredibly high level of insight and had trained in the Nine Chaos Seals before. Thus, he found it quite simple to break the second layer of runes.

He broke through one layer after another, but the difficulty level began to gradually increase. Ning began to need more and more time for each layer. In the blink of an eye, over a hundred million years went by.

"Time to give it a rest." Ning suddenly came to a halt. The Heart of Eternity had a total of ninety-nine layers, and solving all of them would represent having reached the same level of insight into the Nine Chaos Seals as Autarch Awakener had reached.

"I've only solved nineteen layers." Ning felt a sense of misery in his heart; the difference between the two of them was simply too great. Things would only grow more difficult as he progressed, and for now nineteen layers was his limit. If he spent an extremely long period of time, he would at most be able to just barely solve the twentieth and twenty-first levels. Ninety-nine? Far too hard!

"Autarch Awakener, you created your stone dais and procured the Stonefire Pearl, yet still spent countless years to reach your final level of insight into the Nine Chaos Seals. How can I possibly compare?" Ning

shook his head. “Even if I spent another hundred thousand chaos cycles on this, my chances of successfully breaking through all ninety-nine levels are still very low.”

“I need to complete the Daomerge. Even if I did manage to somehow create this technique, it would be of no use to me in the Daomerge.” Ning secretly sighed to himself. “I’m sorry, Autarch Awakener.”

He had no choice but to put aside this mission of solving the Heart of Eternity for now. To occasionally spend some time on solving the Heart of Eternity to balance out the time spent on other things, but if he focused all of his efforts on it it would make the already-difficult Daomerge completely impossible. The end result would most likely be what big brother Waveshift had divined... certain doom.

“Ninety-nine levels... nineteen levels...” Ning could only laugh at the difference between the two. He then waved his hand, putting the Heart of Eternity away.

Chapter 24: Life Training

Ji Ning didn't hesitate at all. He was completely focused on his own path... the path of the Daomerge! With regards to the Daomerge, all external sources of help were still of secondary use. In the end, his own insights were what counted for the most!

Ning was unable to make further strides with his Omega Sword Dao. Even though he occasionally gained a few insights, they were scattered rather than systemized. This was why he had decided to emulate Autarch Bolin. Back when Autarch Bolin had been a Hegemon, he had gone out of his way to train in many other Daos. As he had raised nine different Daos to the Hegemonic level, he had gained so many scattered insights into the Dao of the Claw that in the end, they had allowed him to suddenly burst through his bottleneck and reach Autarchy, becoming one of the paramount leaders of the cultivator civilizations.

"I am quite similar to how Autarch Bolin was. I'm unable to make any further advancements in my Omega Sword Dao, and it's also quite difficult to gain even scattered insights. However, all Daos are linked together. The more I train in other Daos, the better my chances of succeeding in the Daomerge for my Omega Sword Dao." Ning calmed his mind and began to train in other Daos.

Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, Earth, Formations, Space, Thunder, Illusions... he was quite accomplished in all of them already. Ning's next target was the Dao of Wind.

Amongst Daos, there were certain groupings. For example, the Five Elements were viewed as one group, while 'Wind Earth Fire Water' was yet another grouping. Ning found it quite simple to train in Wind, especially after having acquired the Stonefire Pearl. He needed merely a single Chaos Cycle to train the Dao of Wind to the Archon level. Time, however, was even more difficult than Space.

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Time flowed on like water. Ning's black-robed Primaltwin constantly

trained, while Ning's true body began to rove the universe alongside Azurefiend, Whitethaw, and Flamewing. He had visited fairly few places within even just the Flamedragon Realmverse, after all. There were many dangerous places he had yet to visit. By visiting more places and seeing more things, he would be stimulated and have a better chance at an epiphany.

Ning had a realmship, was at the Hegemonic level of power, and also had Flamewing for protection. He only needed to spend around eighteen chaos cycles to completely go through all of the special 'danger zones' of the Flamedragon Realmverse. However, he had yet to truly traverse the Terror Starsea, which was filled with far too many dangers. That had been a battlefield of the Dawn War, after all. Even Flamewing would find itself easily caught by some of the dire traps located there.

After finishing his wanderings through the danger zones of the Flamedragon Realmverse, Ning began to wander through some ordinary chaosworlds and everworlds, living amongst ordinary mortals and countless aliens. Ning viewed them all from afar and up close.

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Within an ordinary chaosworld. Thirty thousand years ago, a tremendous calamity had descended upon this world, causing its denizens to suffer countless casualties. This world had lost virtually all of its experts and many of its clans, and it was now thousands of times more difficult for mortals to cultivate to become Immortals.

"Old man, what do you think you can do? You are merely at the Houtian level, while I am as well. I'm just twenty years old but still couldn't make the cutoff. Look at how old you are! What makes you think you can succeed?" A young man dressed in brocade who was within a teahouse was laughing and teasing an older man.

"The age cutoff this time is just fifty years, and one has to have reached the Xiantian level. You don't fit either of the two criteria," some of the longtime customers teased the teahouse owner.

"I heard that countless unaffiliated cultivators have been gathering

within Pureplume City, located at the base of the mountain which houses the Pureplume Sect. By now, there are hundreds of thousands of them present. Just a few months remain before the great ceremony... most likely, by then nearly a million cultivators will have arrived to fight over the slots."

"A million Xiantian experts fighting over a thousand honorary disciple slots? Uh... I can count the number of Xiantian experts in our little city on two hands. It is truly unfathomable that the Pureplume Sect can attract nearly a million cultivators when it openly recruits for new disciples."

They all shook their heads and discussed this topic eagerly.

Several figures were seated in the corner of this teahouse. One was a white-robed youth, one was a chubby man, one was a skinny old man, and another was a muscular, honest-looking man who was clearly the bodyguard. The skinny old man looked like a steward, while the chubby man had to be a retainer. As for the white-robed youth, he had to be a young master of a clan. However, judging from how they dressed they had to be quite ordinary. It seemed unlikely that they were from a major clan or family.

The four were Ning and his three followers. Ning continued to eat while listening attentively.

"Don't go, big brother." A young man and woman were seated at a nearby table. The maiden was lively and dressed in green robes, and she was begging the man: "Big brother, you just broke through to the Xiantian level a short while ago and are merely at the early stage of it. Didn't you hear? Nearly a million Xiantian experts have gathered there and all of them want to enter the Pureplume Sect! Peak-level Xiantian experts might stand a chance, while late-stage Xiantian experts can at least give it a try, but you are just an early-stage Xiantian cultivator! Going will be suicide!"

"Even if I risk my life, I have to go." The youth gritted his teeth. "If I go, at least I have a chance at one day clearing the names of our parents and clan. If I don't go, I'll probably never be strong enough to gain revenge, and our clan shall forever bear the infamy of those lies. Father... mother..."

all the seniors of the clan... none of them will be able to rest in ease."

"Big brother..." the green-robed maiden begged, "Let's just find a quiet little place and live a peaceful life. What's wrong with that?"

"You want me to swallow this feud and live a peaceful life? I can't endure it." The youth shook his head. "Give it up, little sister. We're already quite close to Pureplume City. We've already spent three years on the road, and we're finally about to reach our destination. You know you won't change my mind."

The green-robed maiden gnawed at her lips. "I... I only have you left, big brother." The youth's eyes reddened in response.

The two of them were also in a corner, and they spoke in hushed whispers. The people next to them were unable to hear what they were saying.

"Live a good life. If I can enter the Pureplume Sect, I'll come find you one day." The youth rose to his feet, then walked over to Ning's table and said, "Brother Ning, we've travelled together for half a month. Today, we must part ways. Today's drinks are on me! If fate wills it, we will meet again."

"If fate wills it, we will meet again." Ning smiled as he lifted up his own cup. "Brother Qu, I hope you will succeed in joining the Pureplume Sect."

"I definitely will." The youth's eyes shone with great determination.

"Come, let me offer you a final toast prior to our parting." As Ning spoke, he picked up two cups of wine and offered one to the youth.

The youth was slightly startled, but he still accepted it. "Cheers." The youth immediately raised his head and drank the wine. As he did, a faint stream of light within the wine flowed into his body, invisibly and naturally coming to nest within his sea of consciousness.

"Time to go." The youth put down the cup of wine, then turned and left.

Ning revealed a hint of a smile as 'brother Qu' left. He had spent nearly twenty chaos cycles wandering through various ordinary chaosworlds, and he rarely revealed his power. He chose to act just like an ordinary mortal.

Ning had met this youth previously while riding a ship alongside him. The two had shared a spirited conversation while drinking one night on the ship, and thus they had travelled together until today.

“Little sister Qu.” Ning walked over to the young maiden’s table. The young maiden’s eyes were rather red and wet.

“Big brother Ning,” the green-robed maiden said.

“Your big brother will definitely join the Pureplume Sect, and he might become one of the most incredible cultivators in their history. He’ll definitely come back and find you,” Ning said. “I want to offer you a toast as well.”

“Alright.” The green-robed maiden shared a cup with Ning as well, and once more that invisible essence of light slipped into her body via the wine.

A short while later, the green-robed maiden bade Ning farewell as she departed from the teahouse. She was going to Pureplume City as well to watch what happened. She was worried about her big brother.

“Darknorth.” Azurefiend watched as the green-robed maiden departed, then walked over to Ning. Puzzled, he asked, “You’ve spent nearly twenty chaos cycles wandering through various ordinary worlds. You rarely show your power, and even when you do choose to help someone you merely provide them with a tiny bit of guidance. Why did you go out of your way to help these two so much? Not only did you begin an invisible process of completely transforming their bodies, you even bequeathed each of them them with a legacy.”

Ning laughed. In the past, he had merely provided a bit of guidance through karmic magic, using it to change a few mortal destinies. This time, however, he had indeed provided the two with an enormous amount of help. The help he had just provided was enough to allow these two to reach the absolute apex of this chaosworld with ease, and they would even have a chance to reach the World level.

“Haha, this is because today is the final day of my twenty chaos cycles of voyaging,” Ning said with a laugh. “Why can’t I have a bit of fun on my

last day?"

"Last day?" Azurefiend, Whitethaw, and Flamewing all stared at Ning in surprise. They had spent nearly twenty chaos cycles wandering through mortal worlds. Why was today suddenly the final day?

"Yes. I've more or less finished my training." Ning nodded.

Chapter 25: The Dao of Karma

“Let’s go.” Ji Ning rose to his feet, departing the teahouse with Azurefiend, Whitethaw, and Flamewing by his side. As they walked, their forms gradually dissipated into nothingness. None of the ordinary mortals in the teahouse noticed a thing at all. They continued to live their ordinary lives.

Whoosh. Ning and the other three appeared out of nowhere in the void outside this chaosworld.

“So it’s all over? You don’t need to train any further?” Azurefiend asked.

“Yes.” Ning nodded. “I’ve already succeeded in training in the Dao of Karma. Everything has been completed, and at my current level of mastery of the Dao of Karma I can subconsciously sense that even if I trained in other Daos, it would be of no use in attempting the Daomerge for my Omega Dao.”

Ning had trained for nearly 38 chaos cycles after acquiring the Stonefire Pearl. Given that his Primaltwin had constantly been under 100x temporal acceleration, he had actually spent over 3000 chaos cycles training.

The Dao of Wind had been completed incredibly fast, while the Dao of Time had cost him over 300 chaos cycles. The rest of the 3000-plus chaos cycles had all been spent on the Dao of Karma.

The Dao of Karma was legendary for its complexity. Generally speaking, Eternal Emperors would at most learn how to follow karma lines to slay all of an enemy’s clones and avatars. Their mastery of karma would be limited to simply that. Of all the Hegemons and Emperors which Ning had met, Emperor Waveshift had reached the highest level of insight into ‘karma’. Emperor Waveshift had organized all of the karma lines surrounding him in a very neat and orderly way, ensuring that he was no longer bound by it and instead was in control of it and able to make use of it. However, Emperor Waveshift had actually merely reached the Archon level of mastery in the Dao of Karma.

Ning had the Autarch’s stone dais and the Stonefire Pearl, as well as

incredible powers of comprehension, but it had still taken him nearly 3000 chaos cycles in order to reach the Archon level. This was a testament to how difficult this Dao was.

Once one mastered the Dao of Karma, one would surpass even Hegemons in understanding how all living things were connected to each other.

“Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, Earth... the Five Elements. They are supported by the Storm of wind and thunder, while Spacetime envelopes them all. Formations and Illusions merge them into one whole, while Karma serves as the heart.” Ning nodded. Nine represented the apex of numbers, while ten represented perfection. After mastering the Dao of Karma, Ning understood this concept. Now that he had reached the apex in these ten paths, he had already reached the level of full perfection.

He could train more in other Daos, such as the Dao of the Saber, Dao of Snow, or the Dao of Ice, but it would be of no use. They wouldn’t allow Ning to gain any more fragmentary insights into the Omega Sword Dao at all.

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“Karma.” Ning stood there in the void outside the chaosworld, gazing at everything around him. He had just mastered the Dao of Karma, and he was attuning to the many new insights into the universe it was bringing him. He was gaining many new ideas into the Omega Sword Dao. Although they weren’t systemized, they would be of use to him when the Daomerge came.

Ning turned to scan the surrounding area. Spacetime could no longer bar his gaze, and he saw countless distant chaosworlds, planets, and even everworlds. He was able to see through over a hundred territories around them.

He saw the grass emerge from the dirt of a distant world...

He saw how a mortal lived for a hundred years, then returned to the embrace of the earth...

He saw a mortal embark upon the path of cultivation, completely focused on becoming an Immortal...

He saw monsters struggling in terror, fearing that they would be found and slain by cultivators...

He saw Diremonsters claim hegemony over a region, devouring and massacring countless humans within it...

He saw aliens propagate to become legion in number, becoming the rulers of a land...

These were all things which Ning had personally experienced and witnessed at close range during the past twenty chaos cycles.

He had seen many powerful Fiendgods and Immortals wander the lands unimpeded. He had seen 'mighty' World-level cultivators who rose to dominate their respective chaosworlds and become the undisputed overlords of them. He also saw them battle against other World-level cultivators for supremacy, with some dying in those battles.

He saw World-level cultivators focus on their cultivation. He saw Samsara Daolords experience all sorts of tempering experiences. Some fearlessly went out adventuring and finally attempted the Daomerge. Even though they all perished, they continued to charge towards the Daomerge like moths towards the flame. Every so often, a few would succeed and gain Eternity for themselves, but perhaps 99,999 out of every 100,000 would fail the Daomerge and perish.

"Everyone from ordinary mortals to Samsara Daolords have their own paths," Ning murmured softly. "This is the nature of the cultivator civilizations."

"How wonderful." This was how Ning summarized it all. He liked how the cultivator civilizations worked. Thank goodness they had won the Dawn War! Otherwise, all living beings would've been enslaved by the Sithe.

"All living beings within the cultivator civilizations should feel gratitude towards the Autarchs." When Ning thought of this, he could immediately

but subconsciously sense that all living beings were connected to the Autarchs by karma. They all owed the Autarchs. However, the Autarchs were so overwhelmingly powerful that karma had no power over them any longer.

“I hope the cultivator civilizations will be able to survive and thrive unto eternity. I hope we won’t be destroyed by the Sithe or other similarly terrifying groups.” Ning then smiled. “Not really for me to worry about, though. I’m not even as strong as Flamewing right now.”

Ning put this out of his mind and began to make the karma lines around him more orderly. He hadn’t been alive for too long, and so although the karma lines around him seemed complicated he was able to realign them and smooth them out in short order.

“Eh? Two knots?” Ning frowned upon realizing that there were two ‘knots’ in his karma. If he didn’t solve these knots, he would definitely fail his Daomerge!

The first knot was the lifeblood oath he had once sworn. Prior to attempting his Daomerge, he had to accept ten honorary disciples on behalf of Emperor Mirrorsnow. This was something he was bound to do by his lifeblood oath, and Ning knew of it.

The second knot was what truly surprised Ning. It was his promise to slay Emperor Melobo.

When Ning had first left the Three Realms and was merely an Elder God, he had visited the Allgod Estate. He had been bestowed with the [Novessence Thunder] technique by the formation-spirit, which was one of the nine novessence arts. As the formation-spirit had put it, it was ‘sowing the seeds of good karma’ with Ning. It had said to Ning: “I won’t force you to do it; I merely hope that you can help,” and had also said that “I’m just planting seeds to sprout in the future. I don’t expect all of them to blossom.”

Back then, the formation-spirit would never have dared to imagine that one of its many seeds would blossom in such a manner. It only hoped that if Ning did become powerful in the future, that he would slay Emperor

Melobo.

Ning had felt this to be an impossible and impossibly distant task, but he had still been rewarded the [Novessence Thunder] technique.

“I’ve now reached the Hegemonic level of power; killing Emperor Melobo would be extremely simple,” Ning mused. “Indeed, now that I think back to it, I do owe both the formation-spirit and Daolord Allgod! During my Daomerge, even the slightest of karmic debts can cause me to be negatively impacted. An Omega Daomerge cannot accept even the slightest of such impacts. It would definitely cause me to fail.”

“Right. I absolutely must complete these two tasks before the Daomerge.” Ning nodded. “It’ll take time for me to track down Emperor Melobo, and it’ll also take time for me to accept ten honorary disciples,” Ning mused. “I’ll go visit Realmslord Windgrace first, then take care of these two matters.”

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“Sorry for the trouble, Hegemon Brightshore.” Ning had come to ask Hegemon Brightshore to assist him in tracking down Emperor Melobo. Hegemon Brightshore was the number one Hegemon of the Flamedragon Realmverse, after all, and he was skilled in the Dao of Spacetime. He also had a strong web of relationships. It would be easy for him to locate Melobo.

“A minor matter,” Hegemon Brightshore replied casually.

“Please keep this secret. Don’t let Melobo find out and then flee the realmverse,” Ning said.

“Don’t worry. I’ll handle this matter personally and will ensure that no mistakes happen. If you don’t mind, I can help you kill him,” Hegemon Brightshore said.

“It would be best if I did it personally,” Ning said.

“Mm, very well. Go ahead and visit Realmslord Windgrace. By the time you are back, I’ll have handled everything.” Hegemon Brightshore was quite confident. He knew that Emperor Melobo was definitely within the

Flamedragon Realmverse. Where, exactly? He didn't know, as it was difficult to find where an Emperor was hiding... but if Hegemon Brightshore personally investigated this matter, he would definitely be able to find Melobo within a hundred thousand years.

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After having asked Hegemon Brightshore for help, Ning, Flamewing, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw rode the realmship out of the Flamedragon Realmverse and towards the Hiddenfiend Realmverse.

These two realmverses were fairly far away from each other. The realmship needed to engage in extremely long-distance spacetime teleports, and it needed as much time as was needed to boil a kettle of tea in order to build up energy between each teleport.

Sixty thousand years later. Whoosh. A realmship suddenly appeared from a spatial tear within the void outside the Hiddenfiend Realmverse.

“And here we are.” Ning stared at the world outside the realmship, his eyes lighting up. This was his first time visiting another realmverse. In contrast, Whitethaw, Azurefiend, and Flamewing were all quite calm. They had all visited many places; Ning was the only inexperienced one present.

“Mm. This place is fairly close to the Blacksun. A single teleport will take us there.” Ning had already acquired a star map of the Hiddenfiend Realmverse prior to arriving.

One more spacetime teleport later, Ning found himself staring at a beautiful and distant star. To be precise, it was an absolutely enormous war machine that was riddled with channels and canals that made up complicated rune-paths. The Blacksun was a terrifying war machine that was capable of changing the destiny of entire realmverse sectors. Just by looking at it, Ning felt an ancient aura of power sweep across him, pressing down upon him like an invisible threat.

“Fellow Daoist Darknorth.” A voice rang out, followed by a chubby youth appearing on the Blacksun who stared in Ning’s direction. Although they were over a hundred billion kilometers away, the two were able to see each other with ease.

“Hegemon Wuye.” Ning put away his realmship.

Chapter 26: Jade Slip

Prior to visiting Realmslord Windgrace, Ji Ning had long ago sent word via the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance that he would be coming. Realmslord Windgrace was quite willing to meet with Ning as well.

The Blacksun. Ning's group of four was led to a courtyard within it.

Hegemon Wuye smiled: "Master has been waiting for quite some time. When he heard that you were coming, he was quite excited. I felt quite eager as well. I've heard of your illustrious reputation long ago, Darknorth, and I've also heard of Flamewing God the Chaos Primordial. Today, I've finally met you two." He was unable to disguise his interested glance towards the nearby Flamewing.

Flamewing was quite chubby, but was much larger than Wuye. When he saw Wuye, he mumbled, "He looks yummy."

Hegemon Wuye's face turned pale and he hurriedly pushed the door open and called, "Master!"

There was a withered tree inside the courtyard. Below it was a prayer mat, with a disheveled-looking old man seated atop it. The old man's eyebrows looked quite messy, but his gaze was extremely calm. He had a smile on his face, and he pointed to the prayer mats next to him.
"Darknorth, my young friend. Sit."

"Thank you, Realmslord Windgrace." Ning walked over and sat down on a prayer mat. Azurefiend and Whitethaw did the same, while Flamewing lazily sauntered over to a boulder and lay down on it while shaking his rump.

"Chaos Primordials truly are extraordinary," Realmslord Windgrace praised. He then glanced at Ning. "Darknorth, my young friend... I'm sure you didn't come to visit me just to show off your Chaos Primordial."

"There is indeed something I wish for you to help me with, Realmslord," Ning said.

"Go ahead and explain." Realmslord Windgrace was quite willing to help

Ning out; the more he helped Ning out, the greater his chances of acquiring the Flamewing God after Ning failed the Daomerge would be.

“I’ve heard legends of two marvelous items that are of tremendous use during the Daomerge. One is known as the Daomerge Firecloud Flower, while the other is known as the Incense Spirit-Fruit,” Ning said. “Are you aware of them, Realmslord?”

Realmslord Windgrace looked at Ning in astonishment, then sighed. “Impressive, truly impressive. Daolord Darknorth, how is it that you know of such incredibly rare items? Even I only learned of them due to a lucky encounter.”

Ning was delighted. He immediately asked, “Realmslord, do you know where they can be found?”

“Daomerge Firecloud Flowers and Incense Spirit-Fruits should be considered legendary treasures for Daolords attempting the Daomerge,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “When I served Autarch Titanos, we once discussed Daomerge treasures, with the topic focusing on the treasures that provided incredibly marvelous effects for short periods of time. Autarch Titanos praised the Daomerge Firecloud Flower as being best, with the Incense Spirit-Fruit being second.”

“Both of these items vastly surpass the Voidsea Jadeseals. During the Daomerge, someone who has eaten an Incense Spirit-Fruit will enter a truly profound state where his body is divided into nine different incarnations. All nine of them can test out a simulated Daomerge while the true body undergoes the real Daomerge. So long as one of the nine incarnations succeeds, the true body can succeed in the Daomerge as well,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “As for the Daomerge Firecloud Flower, it’s even more remarkable. It can allow for the creation of eighty-one incarnations that will all simulate the Daomerge at the same time!”

“But of course, what I’m saying only stands true for ordinary Daolords. The more talented a Daolord is, the more energy each incarnation consumes from an Incense Spirit-Fruit or a Daomerge Firecloud Flower. Those who have fused multiple Supreme Daos will only be able to create a

single incarnation after eating an Incense Spirit-Fruit, while a Daomerge Firecloud Flower can at most maintain a total of nine incarnations. These two treasures have a similar function, which means you can only choose to use one of them. You can't mix and match... and they only have these marvelous effects when you use them during your actual Daomerge."

Realmslord Windgrace looked at Ning and smiled. "What, Darknorth... do you need the Daomerge Firecloud Flower?"

Ning was amazed. So this was the effect these items had? The Voidsea Jadeseal allowed for just a single simulated Daomerge, but it didn't have to be used during the actual Daomerge! The problem with it was that it just wasn't all that powerful in comparison. For supreme Daolords who had fused multiple Supreme Daos, it would only allow for a small part of the Daomerge to be simulated.

In comparison, the Incense Spirit-Fruit was clearly far more powerful, while the Daomerge Firecloud Flower was ridiculously effective. The problem was, they could only be used during the actual Daomerge!

"So someone who has fused multiple Supreme Daos can have nine incarnations assisting him when he uses the Daomerge Firecloud Flower?" Ning mused to himself, "Then my Omega Dao... I wonder if I'll have even a single incarnation." As for the Incense Spirit-Fruit, Ning had already mentally discarded it.

"You train in an Omega Dao, yes?" Realmslord Windgrace asked.

"Yes." Ning acknowledged it.

"Daomerges for Omega Daos are incredibly difficult. I imagine only the top Daomerge treasure, the Daomerge Firecloud Flower, will be of some use to you." Realmslord Windgrace shook his head. "And its use will probably be highly limited. I've heard of Omega Daolords who have used it but still failed. There has just never been anyone successful in an Omega Daomerge." Realmslord Windgrace let out a sigh.

Every single realmverse had a few Hegemons, which meant that the vast Chaosverse had a large number of them... but it had never seen so much as a single successful Omega Daomerge!

“As long as it helps out, I’ll take it.” Ning laughed. “Anything that can increase my chances by even a sliver is a good thing. Perhaps that’ll be the sliver that pushes me over to success during the Daomerge.”

“That’s a nice way to view it. You need that sort of attitude when you attempt the Daomerge. If you are panicking, you’ll have lost half the battle before it even starts,” Realmslord Windgrace said.

“Realmslord, do you know where Daomerge Firecloud Flowers can be found?” Ning asked.

“I do. They can be found in several places,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “Daomerge Firecloud Flowers are incredibly valuable to Daolords, but to us they are nothing more than fairly unusual treasures that are generally used to create pills.”

Ning was overjoyed. His eyes lit up as he asked, “If the Daomerge Firecloud Flowers are used to create pills, will they perhaps be of even greater assistance during the Daomerge?”

“No, no! If you use them to make pills, you’ll actually waste the special effect they have during the Daomerge,” Realmslord Windgrace said hurriedly. “Daomerge Firecloud Flowers are naturally endowed with those unique properties, but once you use it to create a pill the properties are lost. In addition, they can only be used within a thousand years after they first bloom! After a thousand years go by, their aura will completely vanish and their medicinal value will drop by over 90% as well.”

Ning nodded. “Then where can they be harvested?”

Realmslord Windgrace frowned. “Are you still going to go for one? The place they are located is incredibly dangerous. I know where they can be found, but even I wouldn’t dare to go there without a good reason. Generally speaking, several of my friends would join forces in venturing there.”

“The place is that dangerous?” Ning was surprised.

“The Chaosverse is filled with countless marvels as well as many incredibly dangerous places. However, the Chaosverse is so vast that it’s

hard to even locate those places unless you know exactly where they are,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “Ordinary realmverses and otherverses would never be able to give birth to something like a Daomerge Firecloud Flower. Only some of the truly marvelous places of the Chaosverse, places which gather together countless different types of universal essence, can possibly give birth to such remarkable treasures.”

“All of these places, however, are tightly protected by the prime essences of the Chaosverse,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “The Sithe attempted to invade and conquer many of these places and take their contents by force, but the result was that they suffered tremendously heavy casualties.”

“So what type of dangers do those places hold?” Ning asked.

“A type of being known as a ‘Sourcewalker’,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “Let me put it to you like this. Normally, the Chaosverse can give birth to two extremely perfect types of beings. The first are known as the ‘Chaos Godbeasts’, while the second are known as the ‘Ancients’.”

Ning nodded slowly. Hegemon Brightshore was a Chaos Godbeast, while Ninedust was a member of the Ancients. They were born at the World level and had incredibly perfect divine bodies.

“Chaos Godbeasts have comparatively lower levels of comprehension, while Ancients take human form and have much higher comprehension skills,” Realmslord Windgrace said.

Ning smiled. The only member of the Brightshore Imperials to succeed in the Daomerge was Hegemon Brightshore himself. It was incredibly difficult for Chaos Godbeasts as a race to succeed in the Daomerge. Azurefiend and Welkin were both Chaos Godbeasts, but they were the only Hegemons to have ever arisen from their race. They had no colleagues at all. They were unable or unwilling to spend their entire lives taking care of weaker Chaos Godbeasts as Hegemon Brightshore did, and so they wandered by themselves through the Chaosverse. This was something they had been accustomed to since youth. In contrast, Ancients were far more intelligent and thus had far more Eternal Emperors in comparison.

“Chaos Godbeasts and Ancients... they are present in virtually every realmverse. They are quite common,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “However... two types of living beings are born within the prime essences of the Chaosverse, and they are even more elite. One type is fairly unintelligent, and they are known as the ‘Chaos Primordials’. The other is fairly intelligent and also has human form, and they are known as ‘Chaos Essence Walkers’, or ‘Sourcewalkers’ for short.”

“Chaos Primordials and Sourcewalkers are born with far more exalted bloodlines than Chaos Godbeasts and Ancients,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “However... they represent even greater extremes as well.”

“Chaos Primordials are as unintelligent as mortal children, but are born with virtually indestructible bodies. In contrast, Sourcewalkers are very intelligent and have incredible comprehension skills. They are incredibly solitary and proud figures who do not dwell in ordinary places. They delight in dwelling in treasured places where countless streams of essence from the Chaosverse gather together, and they treat those places as their own territories,” Realmslord Windgrace said. “Unlike Chaos Primordials, they cannot be ‘tamed’; they are simply far too intelligent. There is no way one can force them to submit.”

“If you wish to go to one of those sacred places where Daomerge Firecloud Flowers can be harvested, that means you are going to steal treasures from a Sourcewalker’s territory. You will enrage them.”

Realmslord Windgrace shook his head.

Ning pondered this matter. He wasn’t surprised at all. Although this was his first time hearing of ‘Sourcewalkers’, he had already heard of strange beings that were on par with the Autarchs themselves. Why would he be shocked to hear that there were certain creatures on par with Chaos Primordials in might?

“Sourcewalkers are all extremely intelligent, which means they do have a weakness; their bodies aren’t nearly as indestructible as that of the Chaos Primordials, and they are born with much lower levels of strength. However, they can slowly cultivate and grow with time! Thus, there are varying levels of power amongst Sourcewalkers. The weaker ones are

perhaps merely at the Hegemonic level, while the most powerful were supposedly on par with the Sithe Exalts, capable of killing us in an instant," Realmslord Windgrace said.

Ning relaxed slightly. If even the most powerful were 'merely' on par with Sith Exalts, that meant they were still much weaker than the Autarchs. It must be remembered that it took three Sithe Exalts working together to capture the Flamewing God; a single one wasn't able to do the trick. Plus, he wouldn't be so unlucky as to run into literally the most powerful type of Sourcewalker in existence, right?

"When the Sithe furiously invaded those sacred places to loot the treasures, they enraged the prime essences of the Chaosverse with their greed. The prime essences allowed the Sourcewalkers to borrow from the inherent power of those sacred places, resulting in them becoming much more powerful. This was why the Sithe suffered greatly for their actions," Realmslord Windgrace said. "However... you must be cautious if you do go."

Realmslord Windgrace suddenly waved his hand, causing a jade slip to appear. He then filled it with his godsense, imprinting it with a great deal of information.

"This is one of the closer locations. If you ride on your realmship, you should reach it in just a few hundred thousand years. As I recall, this place has Daomerge Firecloud Flowers within it. This slip now contains all of the information I know regarding that place." As Realmslord Windgrace spoke, he delivered the jade slip to Ning. "Remember, the information I provided covers just the vast majority of situations, not all situations. I didn't delve too deeply into that place either. You really must be careful."

"Thank you, Realmslord." Ning accepted the slip.

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After having received the intelligence he needed, that very day Ning bade Realmslord Windgrace farewell and embarked on a return journey.

He had to first deal with Emperor Melobo, then take on ten honorary disciples for Emperor Mirrorsnow. Only then could he go adventuring

with a calm heart. Anything was possible while out adventuring, after all. He might be forced to initiate the Daomerge for some reason, which would be disastrous if these karmic knots were not resolved.

Chapter 27: Emperor Melobo

After sixty thousand years, Ji Ning returned from the Hiddenfiend Realmverse to his homeland in the Flamedragon Realmverse, at which point his first course of action was to go meet with Hegemon Brightshore.

Whoosh. Hegemon Brightshore noticed right away when Ning and the others entered the Brightshore Kingdom. He appeared at the peak of a tall mountain, having set a banquet in welcome.

“Darknorth!” Hegemon Brightshore called out loudly. Ning and the others turned to look, then all flew over and landed. They sat down, with Flamewing naturally beginning to eat and drink with delight.

“I’m embarrassed to say this...” Hegemon Brightshore shook his head, stroking his beard after downing two cups of wine, “I thought I’d definitely be able to find Emperor Melobo within a hundred thousand years, but this Aeonian Emperor truly is slippery. I’ve been tracking him in secret, but I haven’t been able to find his true body. Recently, I asked Netherlily to help out as well. Only when the two of us worked together did we managed to find him roughly ten thousand years ago.”

Ning let out a sigh of relief upon hearing the words ‘managed to find him’. “I’ll have to thank Hegemon Netherlily,” Ning said.

“A minor matter. The three of us are usually quite bored,” Hegemon Brightshore said with a laugh. “Honestly though, Emperor Melobo really did hide his tracks quite carefully. He’s afraid that the Dao Alliance will discover him devouring some of their Daolords of the Fourth Step, and so he has been cautious to the extreme. Not even the other Aeonians know his whereabouts.”

“If you truly wish to go into hiding, you need to ensure that not even your allies know where you are. That’s the safest way to handle it.” Ning asked, “Oh, right. So where is Emperor Melobo currently?”

“The Orchidfall Everworld of the Orchidfall Territory,” Hegemon Brightshore said.

“The Orchidfall Territory?” Ning nodded slowly.

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The Orchidfall Territory was an ordinary territory located within the Dao Alliance. Inside the Orchidfall Everworld was a powerful sect known as the Sacred Orchidfall, with the most powerful member being a Daolord of the Fourth Step who had quite a few disciples.

“You aren’t Daolord Orchidfall. Who are you?” An alluringly beautiful woman stared angrily at the plainly dressed man before her.

“Haha... my aura is Daolord Orchidfall’s aura, and my appearance is his appearance. How could I possibly not be him?” The man’s voice seemed quite strange and sinister.

“Daolord Orchidfall isn’t as powerful as you are. There’s no way he could’ve destroyed my avatar in just one strike, then caught me with such ease.” The woman’s forehead was creased in anger. “Who are you?!”

The man laughed, his laughter becoming even more evil and piercing to the ear. It echoed within the vast palace, but there was no one else in the entire palace aside from the two of them. “Who am I?” The man’s appearance slowly began to change, as did his aura. Soon, he had transformed into an evil-looking man with long red hair. His eyes were staring greedily at the woman in front of him, as though he was caressing her with his gaze.

“You...” A puzzled look appeared on the woman’s face. “An Emperor?”

“Oh, it seems you do not recognize me.” The long red-haired man let out a smile. “I am an Aeonian, the mighty Emperor Melobo. I am your savior, the one who shall rescue you from your doomed path as a Samsara Daolord.”

“What do you want?” The woman was rather nervous. Her power had been completely sealed away, making it impossible for her to fight back.

“You are absolutely beautiful. Whew. Such beauty...” the long red-haired man said, a blissful look on his face, “I have to say, Emperor Waveshift has truly been a blessing to the Flamedragon Realmverse. He gave us

Crimsonwave Temple, and even techniques like [Vitalis]. As a result, I can now easily simulate the auras of others, allowing me to infiltrate the Dao Alliance and catch beautiful Daolords like yourself with increasing ease."

"Y-you... you are an Aeonian. Are you...." the woman began to panic.

"Daolord Yu, do your best to fight back and struggle against me. That'll make things more fun." Emperor Melobo walked towards her one step at a time, licking his lips.

Aeonians were a very special race. They devoured cultivators like food, which allowed their Aeonian bloodline to evolve. However, after completing the Daomerge and becoming an Eternal Emperor, eating Daolords became of negligible assistance no matter how many they ate. Alas, there were some Aeonians who simply liked to eat cultivators. Not for the sake of growing stronger, but just for the taste; it was just an intrinsic hunger they had! Emperor Melobo was one who delighted in devouring surpassingly beautiful female Daolords. Their auras made him feel extremely comfortable, which was why he viewed them as perfectly delicious morsels.

Long ago, Emperor Melobo had devoured Daolord Allgod's Dao-companion. Daolord Allgod had gone completely crazy, with killing Emperor Melobo becoming his strongest desire.

"Aeonians..." the woman felt shock, horror, and anger. And yet, there was nothing she could do.

"We view you cultivators the same way you might view wild animals! You, however, are the most delicious of morsels." Emperor Melobo enjoyed the horrified look on the woman's face. "Don't worry. More and more female Daolords will accompany you in my belly."

"The Dao Alliance will definitely discover you. You'll definitely die!" The woman was filled with hatred.

"Impossible." Emperor Melobo shook his head. "Prior to acquiring the [Vitalis] technique, I already moved with great care for fear of the Dao Alliance... and now that I have it and can disguise myself? It'll be completely impossible for them to find me. I only act when all factors are

completely under my control, and I never make any mistakes. Even if they try to reverse spacetime to scan for what had happened, they won't find me."

Emperor Melobo was very confident in his own cautious nature. He felt certain that although a Hegemon who whole-heartedly searched for him via multiple channels might be able to find him, it was virtually impossible for anyone else. Only the most supreme powers of the realmverse would be able to find him, and that's only if they were using all of their resources.

"Y-you..." Daolord Yu felt a sense of sorrow and grief in her heart. There had to be a reason why Emperor Melobo had been able to stay alive for so long. How much longer would it be before he died?

"That look of despair on your face is simply delicious." Emperor Melobo continued to slowly walk towards her, extending a hand to gently stroke her face. Daolord Yu wanted to dodge, but her power had been completely sealed away; how could she possibly avoid him? A twisted, excited look appeared on Emperor Melobo's face, and he began to open his mouth.

Right at this moment, a foot was suddenly planted right in his face. This kick was lightning fast, giving him no time to dodge at all. A muffled boom could be heard as Emperor Melobo was knocked flying backwards, smashing into the distant dais at the end of the palace. He bounced off the dais, then smashed into an enormous pillar before finally falling to the ground. He was bleeding from every orifice, and his face had been completely wrecked.

"Who?!" Emperor Melobo stared forwards in shock and horror.

"Who is this?" Moments ago, Daolord Yu had been gripped by despair. Now, her eyes lit up as she saw that a white-robed youth who had a black scabbard on his back had appeared in front of her. Next to him were four figures. The first was a white-bearded, white-robed old man who had six curved horns on his head. The second was a wizened old man. The third was a muscular, white-furred creature. The fourth was a fat man who was eating some meat.

Daolord Yu didn't recognize any of the other four, but she instantly recognized the white-robed youth who had kicked Emperor Melobo. "Daolord Darknorth!" she cried out in delight. This was the most legendary Daolord to have ever existed in the Endless Territories.

Ning turned to glance at her. He recognized her as well. Long ago, when he had first gone out exploring, he had acquired information on all of the known Daolords of the Flamedragon Realmverse. He immediately smiled and said, "Daolord Yu, everything has come to an end. There will no longer be an Emperor Melobo in this world."

Daolord Yu immediately understood what this meant. She said with grateful excitement, "Thank you, Daolord Darknorth." When she looked at him, she felt for some unknown reason that his aura truly was special. In fact, she couldn't help but begin to feel stirred by him. She was a female Daolord of the Fourth Step, but she had never had a Dao-companion in her life. This was her first time meeting Ning, and she could feel her heart stirring.

"NO!" The heavily-bleeding Emperor Melobo hurriedly crawled to his feet, frantically smiling and bowing. "Daolord Darknorth, Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Azurefiend, Flamewing God... I've never offended any of you! Daolord Darknorth, please spare me. I'll never dare to enter the Dao Alliance's territory again. Never again!"

Just now, when Ning had said that there would 'no longer be an Emperor Melobo in this world', Melobo had felt truly terrified. In truth, Daolord Darknorth's very appearance had terrified him. Daolord Darknorth was now an exalted figure who had a Hegemon as his retainer and a Chaos Primordial as his servant. Even the other Hegemons dreaded him. Who would dare to antagonize him? There were now two transcendent figures in the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance. One was Realmslord Windgrace, the other was this monstrously talented Daolord, Darknorth.

"Hegemon Brightshore? Hegemon Azurefiend?" Daolord Yu was stunned. She didn't know the secret identity of the Flamewing God, but she was shocked to hear that there were actually two Hegemons standing before her.

“Darknorth.” Hegemon Brightshore chuckled and said, “Don’t waste words on Melobo. Just go ahead and kill him.”

“Don’t kill me!” Emperor Melobo was on the verge of tears. He was an ordinary Emperor and didn’t have all that much courage. He begged, “I’ve never caused trouble for any of you. If there’s something you want, just tell me, Daolord Darknorth! I’ll definitely obey you.”

Ning said, “Melobo, there’s a reason I didn’t just kill you with that earlier kick. There’s something I need to tell you first.”

Melobo’s face turned pale. And indeed, Ning was telling the truth. Given his Hegemonic power, he was easily capable of annihilating Emperor Melobo with a single kick.

Chapter 28: Daolord Darknorth's Era

"I-I..." Emperor Melobo really did begin to cry. Begging was useless. What was he to do?

Ji Ning continued, "The reason why I'm going to kill you... is because of Daolord Allgod."

"Daolord Allgod?" Emperor Melobo's already-pale face turned completely ashen. Of course he remembered that madman! Daolord Allgod had been willing to pay any price in his efforts to kill Melobo, and he had nearly succeeded. Emperor Melobo had only been able to escape by the skin of his teeth.

"He died! He died long ago! There's no way you could've ever met him." Emperor Melobo was panicking.

"True. I never met him. When I was an Elder God, however, I received a bit of kindness from him. His formation-spirit bestowed me with a secret art," Ning said, "And then expressed the hope that if I ever grew strong enough, I would help Daolord Allgod exact revenge upon you and kill you. Although this was nothing more than the dying will of a man who had already lost himself to despair... since I have benefited from him, I'm naturally going to help him carry out his wishes."

"The reason I'm telling you this is so that you'll understand that you... are now dying because of Daolord Allgod," Ning said.

"I-I..." Emperor Melobo now understood everything, and his mind was in a state of chaos. Daolord Allgod had once been an extraordinarily talented figure, and he and his Dao-companion had been like a pair of truly divine lovers. Alas, Emperor Melobo's devouring of his Dao-companion had driven him completely mad. Daolord Allgod had been filled with resentment and hatred until the day he died, and even when he died his eyes remained open and filled with rage.

Neither Emperor Melobo nor Allgod ever would've imagined that the Allgod Estate he casually set up before dying would result in an Elder God, Ji Ning, owing him a debt... and then coming to repay it. Today, Emperor

Melobo would die!

Slash. Ning waved his hand, causing a streak of sword-light to appear in the air. The sword-light was ephemeral and indistinct, hard to see with the naked eye. It instantly slashed across Emperor Melobo's body, and as it did so it spread out alongside the Aeonian's karma lines. Everything which had any of his soul or truesoul within it was completely severed!

Emperor Melobo's gaze grew dim. His soul was shattered, and he perished on the spot. Now that Ning had reached such incredible heights in the Dao of Karma, he had learned some new and truly terrifying ways of killing people.

"Fine sword-arts," Hegemon Brightshore said in praise.

"A pity." Ning glanced at Emperor Melobo's corpse, then murmured softly, "Daolord Allgod was a true genius, but he spent most of his life a madman because of this Aeonian. Not even death was an escape for him."

"If Daolord Allgod knew what you did for him, he would feel relieved," Hegemon Brightshore said.

"But he has died and his Dao has vanished. There's no way for him to know." Ning sighed, then turned to leave.

Daolord Yu continued to stare at Ning, her eyes shining. Ning gently waved a finger at her, causing a stream of Immortal energy to fly into her body. It easily undid the seals that were inside of her. Given Ning's current level of mastery of the Dao of Formations, unlocking seals like these was incredibly simple.

"Let's go," Ning said. Hegemon Brightshore and Hegemon Azurefiend both glanced at Daolord Yu, and then they followed Ning in stepping into the void and vanishing.

Daolord Yu stared as Ning vanished before her very eyes. "Daolord Darknorth... Daolord Darknorth..." she murmured repeatedly. He had appeared in her hour of need, when she had been gripped by complete despair. Then, with unbelievable power, he had killed Emperor Melobo as easily as squishing an ant. All of this had intoxicated her. Even Hegemon

Brightshore and Hegemon Azurefiend, two mighty Hegemons, had clearly accepted Ning as their leader in this affair.

His power, his voice, his sword-light... all of these things stirred her heart. However, she also knew that this was nothing more than a bit of infatuation. "It feels like a dream." Daolord Yu smiled. A dream was enough for her.

She suddenly turned and saw the various treasures which Emperor Melobo had left behind. A long-lived Emperor like Melobo had many treasures, but Daolord Darknorth and the others had left without touching them. Clearly, they had left the treasures for her.

"For me?" Daolord Yu rose to her feet. "Daolord Darknorth left them behind for me?" She felt a surge of joy in her heart.

In truth, Ning had already swept through the Jadefire Realm's prisons and possessed an incredible amount of treasures. Emperor Melobo wasn't even at the Archon level; how could Ning feel any interest towards his treasures? Ning didn't even want to bother going through them, and the same was doubly true for Azurefiend and Brightshore.

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Within the Aeonian Kingdom. An avatar was lying within an ancient palace. This was Emperor Melobo's avatar. Moments ago, he had been begging for help. Now, his aura had vanished.

Emperor Anchen, Emperor Islehide, and Emperor Duug all stared at his avatar's corpse. "It was Daolord Darknorth who did the deed," Emperor Islehide said softly.

"What can we do?" Emperor Duug said helplessly.

"Nothing but just stare." Emperor Anchen laughed bitterly. "We should feel thankful that Daolord Darknorth has chosen not to cause trouble for us Aeonians. There's no way we would ever dare to go find him! All we can do is hide here in the Aeonian Kingdom and keep ourselves alive."

All three of them felt quite resigned. Emperor Melobo had begged them for help, but who were they supposed to beg? It was Daolord Darknorth

who had killed Melobo! Who in the entire Sixteen Realmverses Alliance would dare stand in his path? Realmslord Windgrace, perhaps... but if he knew of this matter, he'd probably come help Darknorth out!

All of the Hegemons and Emperors were quite intelligent. By now, they could all guess that Realmslord Windgrace and the Lonely King, two truly terrifying figures, were both waiting for the day Daolord Darknorth failed his Daomerge! Neither of them wished to make an enemy out of Darknorth at a time like this. If they pressed him too hard, it would be of no benefit to them but could possibly bring disaster upon themselves. Nobody could stop a rampaging Flamewing, after all!

"I told them all long ago, given that we aren't on good terms with Daolord Darknorth, we Aeonians need to stay low-key during this era, the era of Daolord Darknorth. Don't cause trouble!" Emperor Anchen muttered, "Melobo actually dared to secretly infiltrate the Dao Alliance. He has no one to blame for his death but himself. Send word once more to all the elders that they need to be good boys! Daolord Darknorth isn't as reasonable as the other major powers, and there's no one who can stop him if he attacks."

"Agreed." All of them understood that so long as Daolord Darknorth was alive, this era would belong to him. He was the most dazzling figure in all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, and even Realmslord Windgrace would stand on his side.

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"Darknorth, if my visions serves, that female Daolord seems to be a bit smitten with you." After leaving the Orchidfall Everworld, Hegemon Brightshore began to tease Ning a bit.

"Haha..." Ning laughed. "Nothing more than a bit of infatuation. It doesn't count for much." By now, the only person in all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance who was on par with Ning in the Dao of Karma was Emperor Waveshift himself. Ning had naturally been able to discern Daolord Yu's interest in him through his mastery of karma. But it was nothing more than a bit of interest; it wouldn't have any true impact on

her at all.

“Hegemon Brightshore, next I plan to scour the entire Flamedragon Realmverse to accept disciples on behalf of my master,” Ning said.

“Accept disciples on behalf of your master?” Hegemon Brightshore was puzzled.

“Yes, on behalf of my master, Emperor Mirrorsnow,” Ning said. “I need to accept ten! Although I’m technically accepting on his behalf, given that he is adventuring in the outside world I’ll naturally have to teach them myself.” He would be their senior apprentice-brother in name, but their teacher in truth.

“I might be taking on disciples on his behalf, but I still cannot be casual about this,” Ning said. “I’m planning to divide the Flamedragon Realmverse into nine ‘regions’, and will pick out ten World-level cultivators from each region. I’ll then select ten disciples from those ninety World-level cultivators. If I meet a few I’m truly interested in, I might even accept them as my own personal disciple.”

Only after this concluded would he go out adventuring. He would be fully prepared for the Daomerge by then, and so he would also have to select a few more heirs in the event of his failure.

The Three Realms was simply too small of a place. Although he was leaving his Omega Sword Dao behind in the Three Realms, he had yet to find anyone he felt truly worthy of passing his technique down to.

“You accepting a disciple would be a momentous occasion.” Hegemon Brightshore grew a bit excited. “Haha, a Daolord who has the power of a Hegemon... this is truly unprecedented. Your Dao has to be far stronger than ours! Perhaps I’ll send a few geniuses from the Brightshore Kingdom to take part as well.”

“That’s fine.” Ning nodded. “Everyone in the Flamedragon Realmverse is invited, save for the Aeonians.”

Ning didn’t feel any enmity towards the Dark Kingdom. In truth, it consisted of cultivators who had escaped a destroyed realmverse. There

was no need to truly treat them as enemies. As Ning had grown more powerful, his view of the universe had changed as well. The only ones he continued to harbor enmity towards were the Aeonians.

Aeonians treated cultivators as food. Ning felt a tremendous amount of distaste towards them. However, since he knew that Autarch Bolin had been the one to create the Aeonians, Ning elected to simply ignore them. There was no way he would go accept one of them as his disciple.

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Ning also told Hegemon Windrain, Hegemon Netherlily, and the Dao Alliance about his plans to accept disciples on behalf of his master! He informed them that he would be accepting ten disciples and could possibly even choose a few personal disciples. However, all candidates had to be skilled in the sword and be at the World level of cultivation!

The entire Flamedragon Realmverse was thrown into a state of chaos by this news. It must be understood that Ning would never casually transmit his Omega Sword Dao to others; to date, the only one he had shown it to was Daoist Bluestone. Everyone knew how incredibly powerful Ning was, and every organization hoped that one of their geniuses of the Dao of the Sword would have the chance to inherit Daolord Darknorth's supreme technique.

And so, word of how the Flamedragon Realmverse was being divided into nine 'regions' quickly began to spread. Even many of the independent cultivators heard of this, and they all began to hasten towards the region closest to them.

The countless World-level cultivators all wished to become apprenticed to the most peerless Daolord to have ever existed, Daolord Darknorth.

Chapter 29: Sword Shack

Within a private room inside Vastheaven Palace. The white-robed Ji Ning was seated alone. Waving his hand, he caused ten stones to fly towards him and then hang there in the air before him.

Crackle, crackle, crackle. Ning waved his finger gently, causing flames to appear around the ten levitating stones and blaze away against them. The stones slowly began to melt, with runic patterns beginning to gradually appear on their surfaces. Everything was as Ning willed it, and so the runic patterns joined together into a complex runic formation that caused the ten stones to transform into ten black loops. Ning then picked out a few other precious materials and infused them into the loops.

Ning had reached incredible heights in both the Dao of Fire and the Dao of Formations. As a result, creating simple Eternal treasures like these was incredibly easy for him. As for the materials he used, they were valuable enough to drive many Eternal Emperors mad with greed... but to Ning, he had literal mountains of them.

“Success.” Ning smiled. All ten bracelets glimmered with golden, silver, and violet lines that emanated strange ripples of power.

“Top-grade Eternal treasures. Given the ingredients I put into them, only Hegemons should be able to destroy them.” Ning then took control over the ten loops, sending his godsense into one of them.

Whoosh. A space that was ten thousand kilometers in size appeared before him. These loops were all estate-type treasures! However, they were limited in size to ‘just’ ten thousand kilometers because they were exceptionally stable.

“Let the earth form.” A vast earth began to emerge from the bottom of the space, quickly covering up all ten thousand kilometers of the estate-treasure.

“Let the mountains arise!” Soon, a vast mountain range thundered up from the earth, stretching upwards for nearly ten thousand kilometers.

In accordance with Ning's will, this ten thousand kilometer world became primarily filled with mountain ranges as well as a few rivers.

"The Sword Shack." Ning's godsense incarnation waved a finger, causing an ordinary looking thatched cottage to appear within the largest mountain valley.

Another hour went past. By now, Ning's true body had created a prayer mat which he put within the Sword Shack. The most valuable item in this entire estate-treasure was this prayer mat, something which even many Eternal Emperors would pine for as they cultivated. Cultivators would find that their hearts and minds would grow very calm as they sat there, and they would be able to train and meditate much more quickly than normally. Ning had emulated the Autarch's stone dais in his creation of this prayer mat.

Although he wasn't even close to the Autarch's level of insight, his prayer mats still had roughly 5% of the effectiveness of the Stone Censor of Reunion; thus, they could be considered rare and valuable treasures.

"This world shall be a world of the Dao of the Sword." Ning's godsense incarnation swept the world with his gaze. Rumble... every single part of this world, including the mountains and the deep crevices, all became filled with sword-arts. There were many of them, all of them varied and complex.

These were the various sword-arts which could be discovered once one researched and dissected Emperor Mirrorsnow's [Heartseal] sword-art. By now, Ning had reached a higher level of insight into the Dao of the Sword than Emperor Mirrorsnow ever had. He had first dissected all of the many sword-arts which were the underpinnings of the [Heartseal] sword-art, and then used the [Heartseal] sword-art as the basis for formulating eight even more profound sword-arts that were focused in different areas. Ning had now reached a high level of mastery over karma, giving him even greater powers of deductive reasoning. Given that he already had the Omega Sword Dao as his foundation, it was quite simple for him to formulate multiple Archon-class sword-arts.

If Ning merely wished to attempt the Daomerge via a single Supreme Dao, he would probably find the Daomerge to be much easier. However, his path was already set. Once it was set, there was no way to go back, no room for regret.

Besides... all things were relative. Ning's path was that of the Omega Sword Dao. He had seen and experienced many things, and had also created multiple Archon-class techniques for the Daos of Space, Formations, Time, Karma, and more. This was why he was able to create so many Archon-class sword-arts with ease. If he had chosen to embark upon a simpler path, he would've been much more limited in his abilities and would never have reached his current heights.

"The Sword Shack is perfect for meditation, allowing one to train quite quickly." Ning nodded. "Within the world of the Sword Shack, those who wish to acquire rare and exceptional sword-arts must first pass a few tests."

"Alright. The Sword Shack will be more than enough to guide them on their paths." Ning revealed a smile. Since he had chosen to accept disciples on behalf of his teacher, he naturally had to give these 'fellow disciples' some treasures.

It was guaranteed that he wouldn't have much time to personally teach them, which was why he had put all this effort into creating the Sword Shack. This was a treasure that was far more valuable than the godsense legacy which Emperor Mirrorsnow had provided him when Mirrorsnow had taken him on as a disciple. Ning had a higher level of insight into the Dao of the Sword, after all, which meant that he also had better ways of teaching. He truly did hope that these ten 'junior apprentice-brothers' or 'junior apprentice-sisters' would be able to surpass what he was able to offer them.

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It took Ning half a day to create these ten Sword Shack worlds, then another eighty-plus years creating five more Silver Sword Shacks. Thanks to his mastery of the Dao of Karma, Ning had the vague feeling that he

would at most take on a maximum of nine disciples.

He had previously already taken on Bluecliff Xiaoyu, 'Green Bamboo' Yang Quding, and young master Skywind; three disciples in total! If he factored in the legacy he had left behind after becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step, it was guaranteed that he would have a fourth disciple as well.

Ning had the feeling that he would at most take on five more disciples. This time, he would see if there was anyone who interested and intrigued him enough so that he would take them on as a personal disciple instead of an honorary disciple on behalf of his master. He wouldn't try to force things; it would all be left up to luck and fate. If he found someone interesting, he would accept them.

These five Silver Sword Shacks were meant for his personal disciples. Thus, Ning spent much more effort on them. They were quite similar to the other sword shacks, but Ning used even more precious ingredients on the prayer mats, and also put much more effort into the creation of the formations. Every single one of the prayer mats was almost 20% as effective as the Stone Censer of Reunion! More importantly, the Silver Sword Shacks were not centered around Emperor Mirrorsnow's [Heartseal] sword-art; rather, they were centered around Ning's own [Omega Sword Dao].

But of course, he couldn't simply transmit his Dao to them. Rather, he used many different sword-techniques to serve as guides, and also left behind imprints of the sword-intent of the five stances of his Omega Sword Dao.

"I'll have given them all I can give. Even the ten ordinary Sword Shacks have been filled with all the foundations they need; with those foundations, they have enough to develop the Omega Sword Dao on their own if they have the talent." Ning nodded. He himself had slowly gained bits and pieces of insights which he had gradually used to make up for the deficiencies in his foundations, then finally been tempered into developing his Omega Sword Dao.

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After finishing the creation of his gifts, Ning waited for another nine million years before the grand event which spanned the entire Flamedragon Realmverse began! Everyone was filled with excitement.

“It’s said that many powerful Daolords of the Fourth Step have come to watch the competitions. Even if we cannot end up being apprenticed to Daolord Darknorth, we might be able to become apprenticed to other powerful Daolords.”

“There are even some legendary Eternal Emperors and other ancient figures who have come to watch. They might take the opportunity to accept a disciple as well.”

“That’s nothing! All three of the almighty Hegemons have come alongside Daolord Darknorth! To be apprenticed to one of the three Hegemons or Daolord Darknorth would be truly incredible.”

This event was simply on far too vast of a scale. The six major organizations in the Flamedragon Realmverse were normally in a state of balance, and so it was impossible for anyone save Ning to cause the entire realmverse to be thrown into such a state of upheaval. This sort of tournament and selection process was far grander than the ones which the Brightshore Kingdom utilized! But of course, there were many major powers and Emperors who were watching intently, wanting to take advantage of Ning’s event to perhaps choose a few genius disciples for themselves.

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The nine major regions were each governed by Archon-class major powers as well as their subordinate Emperors. There was an orderly process that had been implemented.

However, the number of independent cultivators who came was simply enormous. Thus, the first year was just the pre-selection competition, where all those who didn’t reach a certain minimum level of power were washed out. Ning was naturally the one who set the ‘minimum threshold’, which was simply the ‘supreme World God’ level. This alone washed out

99% of the cultivators.

Next, he teleported the remaining elites into the Vastheaven Everworld, to a place Ning had personally created... the Stairway to Heaven! The next trial would be the process of ascending the Stairway to Heaven.

The Stairway to Heaven was unfathomably high. If you wished to advance farther along the Stairway to Heaven, you would have to go through one contest after another. One side had to be killed or surrender before the other side could advance.

The Emperors, Hegemons, and Ning all watched intently as the battles in the Stairway to Heaven proceeded.

“This kid isn’t bad. I want him.” One of the Eternal Emperors in the Dao Alliance laughed, then waved a finger gently as he caused a strand of Eternal power to reach out and envelop the World-level cultivator who had nearly died just now.

Ning and the three Hegemons sat upon the highest thrones, watching from afar. They didn’t move to interfere. Only Emperors were qualified to select disciples from those who were on the Stairway to Heaven... but even then, they could only choose those who had failed! Only Ning and the three Hegemons were permitted to choose successful competitors.

“Interesting.” Ning’s gaze pierced through the void, coming to a rest atop of two figures who were walking side-by-side through the titanic Stairway to Heaven.

“Darknorth, have you taken an interest in those two kids?” Hegemon Brightshore asked.

“I want to watch for a bit longer and see how they perform. I do quite like the two of them, though.” Ning revealed a smile, causing Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Netherlily, and Hegemon Windrain to all laugh. It must be remembered that there were several peerless geniuses on the Stairway to Heaven who had fused multiple Supreme Daos together. The two Ning were staring at had each mastered just a single Supreme Dao.

Chapter 30: Fifth Disciple, Sixth Disciple

A young man and woman were standing side-by-side upon the Stairway to Heaven. The stairways were incredibly vast and covered with vague sword-scars. Ji Ning had left them here in order to benefit the World-level cultivators who were selected to take part in the tournament. As for how much benefit they would gain from it, that would be up to their own comprehension abilities.

“Absolutely incredible.” The youth and the maiden were staring upwards at the sword-scars above the stairs.

“Boundless, even the sword-scars which Daolord Darknorth left behind in a casual manner are filled with unfathomable profundity. Even if we don’t manage to become apprenticed to him or the other major powers, just having viewed them here at the Stairway to Heaven means it was all worth it,” the white-robed maiden said.

The youth nodded. Both of them knew their own limits. Although they were excellent figures in the world at large, here at the Stairway to Heaven they were ranked close to the bottom. However, as they ascended the Stairway to Heaven and viewed more and more of the sword-scars they were beginning to skyrocket in power.

As the controller of the Stairway to Heaven, Ning made sure that they weren’t given ridiculously powerful opponents. Only the weakest would be washed out, while the strongest would be able to walk farther and farther. Ning wanted to make sure that the strongest wouldn’t run into each other and then be washed out early.

Time passed on, one year after another. The World-level cultivators all moved quite slowly up the Stairway to Heaven, as all of them wished to meditate on the mysteries hidden within the sword-scars. Each battle meant that they might lose and be forced to leave, and so they were all quite slow and cautious.

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Ten thousand years had passed since their arrival at the Stairway to

Heaven.

“Boundless, you’ve now mastered two Supreme Daos? You were faster than me!” the maiden said jubilantly.

“Muse, you were one step ahead of me in mastering the first Supreme Dao.” The youth smiled as he looked at the maiden. Everyone could easily tell how deeply they loved each other.

The two had arisen together step-by-step from the mortal world. The maiden had once been young master Boundless’ maidservant, and she had been given the name of ‘Muse’. Muse had been born with an incredible soul-physique and had been selected and taken away by an Immortal to a so-called ‘Immortal Realm’. As for young master Boundless, he continued to struggle his way through the mortal world, eventually clambering into the path of Immortal cultivation as well.

After countless battles and tempering experiences, he managed to dazzle everyone as he ascended into the Immortal realm, where he finally met his former maidservant ‘Muse’ once more. The two even had a child together! Eventually, the two ascended to the World-level almost simultaneously, and to this very day they were the only World-level cultivators their homeland had ever produced.

Muse was a Chaos Immortal, while young master Boundless was a dual refiner; both a Ki Refiner and a Fiendgod Body Refiner. As a result, both had Primaltwins which they had left behind in their homelands.

They were a pair of divine lovers, and together they departed from their homeland to wander the Chaosverse, encountering quite a few fortuitous events in the process. The story of how the legendary Daolord Darknorth was going to accept disciples on behalf of his master was an earth-shattering piece of news, resulting in them deciding to take part as well.

“I admit defeat!” Muse’s sword-formation had been overcome by her opponent. She knew that she no longer had any chance, and so she immediately and voluntarily admitted defeat.

After the battle. “Boundless, I lost. Be careful as you proceed up the Stairway. If you are unable to win, just admit defeat.” Muse could sense

how the Stairway to Heaven was becoming increasingly difficult, and so she wanted to admonish her Dao-companion.

“I know.” Boundless nodded.

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Half a month later, Boundless and Muse reunited at the base of the Stairway. “He was just too powerful. Not only was he an Ancient cultivator, he had even reached a higher level of comprehension than I did. I was thoroughly convinced by my defeat.” Boundless shook his head, then said helplessly, “I thought that the two of us could be considered quite talented and would attract some attention from one of the major powers watching, or perhaps a Daolord of the Fourth Step... but who would’ve thought that not a single one would reach out to us?”

“I waited for half a month at the base of the Stairway without anyone coming to meet me either.” Muse nodded.

Both were proud and talented figures, the only World-level cultivators their homeland had ever produced. They had benefited greatly from this experience, but in the end no major powers had come to take them on as disciples.

“Let’s wait for a while longer. Perhaps there will be a Daolord who takes interest in us,” Boundless said.

“Alright, let’s wait.” Muse held onto hope as well. Having a good master could make all the difference in the world. Neither Boundless nor Muse had received any guidance from a Daolord, and thus they knew almost nothing at all about the Endless Territories as a whole.

“Hey there, kids.” A voice suddenly rang out. Boundless and Muse both turned to look, rather excited and eager. Had a major power just chosen them? Who was it? Was it a Daolord of the Fourth Step, or perhaps even an Eternal Emperor? Or could it be a Hegemon... or perhaps even Daolord Darknorth? Although they knew rationally that it was unlikely someone particularly powerful had chosen them, they still clung onto their hopes and dreams.

They saw a white-robed youth walking towards them from afar. His aura was quite unique, and he didn't give them any sense of pressure at all. He seemed quite... ordinary.

"A Daolord?" Both Boundless and Muse felt rather disappointed. It was still fairly easy to distinguish a Daolord's aura from an Eternal Emperor's aura. Every single Eternal Emperor emanated an aura that had the scent of 'eternity' about it, an aura that whispered that time had no hold over this person.

Moments later, they quickly regained their usual calm. They were still quite pleased, to tell the truth; perhaps the Daolords who chose disciples here were the weakest masters available, but at least the two of them had been chosen! If no one had chosen them at all, they really would've felt saddened.

"You two have superb comprehension of the sword," Ning congratulated with a smile. Indeed, they were quite impressive.

As far as growth went, Boundless and Muse could actually be ranked in the top ten amongst the World-level cultivators who had come here and learned from the sword-scars. It must be remembered that he knew that the other powers would also be interested in taking on disciples, which was why he had merely required all of the World-level cultivators be 'skilled in the sword', rather than exclusively focus on the Dao of the Sword. Thus, there were (for example) some incredibly talented figures who were skilled in swordplay, but whose true forte lay in the Dao of Spacetime, in the Dao of the Saber, or even heartforce!

Of those who focused on the Dao of the Sword, Muse and Boundless had grown and improved faster than everyone else. Ning was able to tell at a glance that the two hadn't received the proper tutelage, which was why they had improved at such a rapid pace. When Ning saw them, he felt like he saw the mirror images of himself when he had first left the Three Realms.

It was only after Ning had joined the Twelve Palaces of Brightshore that he developed a Supreme Dao, and it wasn't until he had entered the

alternate universe that he had mastered fused Supreme Daos.

In addition, Boundless and Muse were so close to each other that Ning couldn't help but think back to the feelings he and Yu Wei had shared for each other. "What a pity," Ning sighed to himself. If she was still alive, perhaps the two of them could adventure the Chaosverse together, just like Boundless and Muse.

"Are the two of you willing to enter my tutelage?" Ning asked.

"Senior, are you skilled in the Dao of the Sword?" Muse asked.

Ning nodded. As he did so, he caused a terrifyingly powerful aura of sword-intent to emanate from his body, an aura so strong that both Boundless and Muse felt their hearts quiver. However, they didn't truly understand what this aura entailed. They were merely a pair of inexperienced World-level cultivators, after all; in their eyes, all Daolords of the Fourth Step were terrifyingly powerful. They only felt that Ning was terrifyingly strong, capable of wiping them out with just a fraction of his might.

Boundless and Muse exchanged a glance, then immediately knelt down: "Your disciples greet you, Master."

"Mm." Ning nodded. "Follow me, then." An invisible dimensional ripple swept across the two of them. Ning took a single step forwards, shuttling through spacetime and arriving back at the place where the Hegemons and the Emperors were all gathered together.

"Daolord Darknorth."

"Darknorth."

"Congratulations, Daolord Darknorth, on having accepted some fine disciples." The Hegemons and Emperors were all laughing and congratulating Ning as they glanced at the two young fellows standing behind them. They couldn't help but secretly sigh at how incredibly lucky those two young fellows were! Instead of choosing more powerful cultivators, Ning had actually ended up choosing this pair of Dao-companions.

Ning returned to sit in the lotus position atop his cloud, with Hegemon Netherlily, Hegemon Windrain, and Hegemon Brightshore by his side. The four of them were seated the highest.

“B-but...” Boundless and Muse continued to stand behind Ning. They stared at the three awesome Hegemons next to them, then at the many Eternal Emperors below them. Every single person here emanated an aura of eternity. Even the most foolish of World-level cultivators would immediately understand that the many major powers standing subserviently before them were all Eternal Emperors... and so, Boundless and Muse instantly understood that they had just become apprenticed to the legendary Daolord Darknorth.

“W-we...” Boundless and Muse exchanged a glance. Both felt rather light-headed. The auras of the Hegemons and the many Eternal Emperors present were simply too oppressive.

“Master,” Boundless whispered softly.

“From this day forth, you shall be the fifth and sixth disciples under my tutelage,” Ning said.

Boundless and Muse instantly felt excited. Boundless asked, “Master, I heard you are taking on ten disciples in total?”

“No. Misinformation certainly spreads quickly.” Ning shook his head.

“All of you young fellows have been spreading all sorts of wild rumors around.” Hegemon Brightshore laughed merrily, “For this event, Darknorth is accepting disciples on behalf of his own teacher, which means those ten are technically just his junior apprentice brothers and sisters who he will teach in his teacher’s stead. As for the two of you? You are Daolord Darknorth’s personal disciples.”

Boundless and Muse turned to stare at the white-robed, white-haired old man next to them. They felt a sense of closeness and warmth radiating from him.

“Darknorth, how many disciples do you plan on selecting?” Brightshore asked. “If you are done picking, I’m going to start.”

“I’m done.” Ning nodded. “I’ll only choose these two from this event. I’ll pick ten junior apprentice-brothers and sisters at the very end.”

Although quite a few geniuses had taken part in this event, the only ones who had truly moved and intrigued Ning were Boundless and Muse. He felt as though he saw himself and Yu Wei in them, and so he had taken them on as his disciples! At Ning’s level, taking on a disciple was more a matter of personal feelings than anything else. For example, his second disciple ‘Green Bamboo’ Yang Quding had been nothing more than an ordinary mortal.

Ning didn’t keep his words private at all, allowing everyone to hear them. All the Emperors below him turned to stare towards Boundless and Muse with changed looks in their eyes. These two lucky kids! They don’t even know how lucky they are. Their master was someone who no one in all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance would dare to offend, a peerless Daolord who caused even Hegemons to feel dread. He had set up this great tournament which covered the entire Flamedragon Realmverse... and in the end, the only two disciples he had chosen were the two of them.

Chapter 31: A Distant Journey

Finally, this great Flamedragon Realmverse event came to an end. The Hegemons and Emperors all departed one by one, with the Vastheaven Everworld regaining its usual calm.

Within Vastheaven Palace.

“Greetings to you, senior apprentice-brother Darknorth.” Ten World-level cultivators were present. There were youths, elders, aliens, Aberrant special lifeforms, and even an Ancient cultivator. They all bowed respectfully, their gazes filled with unabashed excitement. They had finally been selected! It must be remembered that there were some geniuses who took part in this competition that were just as talented as them. A few were even more talented!

“From this day forth, you are now honorary disciples of Emperor Mirrorsnow,” Ning said. “Our master, Emperor Mirrorsnow, has long ago departed from the Flamedragon Realmverse and gone off adventuring, which is why I shall teach you in his stead. However, in the end cultivation must come from the self. Thus, I will only provide each of you with ten sessions of individualized guidance. After the ten sessions are over, I will not provide you with any further guidance until you become Daolords. Understood?”

“Understood.” Although these World-level cultivators were all secretly surprised, they remained quite calm. They were all geniuses and all quite proud. They usually weren’t all that impressed by most major powers, but they were filled with almost fanatical devotion towards Daolord Darknorth. This was why they had striven so hard to become apprenticed to him. It certainly wasn’t because of ‘Emperor Mirrorsnow’! Not even the chance to become Emperor Mirrorsnow’s personal disciples, rather than just honorary disciples, was nearly as attractive as the chance to have Daolord Darknorth personally instruct them.

Ten sessions? They felt certain that there was a reason why Daolord Darknorth had said this!

“Good.” Ning smiled upon seeing their reactions. “The ten of you are all extremely talented in the Dao of the Sword. Three of you have fused Supreme Daos together, while the other seven have all mastered multiple individual Supreme Daos. All I really need to do is provide you with some guidance. In the end, it will be up to you to walk the path between life and death as you become Samsara Daolords.”

Disciples weren’t necessarily capable of learning everything a teacher had to offer; in life, you had to make do with what materials you had to work with. Every single Samsara Daolord had to find his or her own Dao. Ning felt that it would be quite incredible if even a single one of his personal disciples or ‘junior apprentice-brothers’ and ‘junior apprentice-sisters’ ended up embarking on the path of an Omega Dao. The far more likely result would be that none of them would find that path.

The Omega Dao simply couldn’t be taught. You had to go find it on your own! As a wise teacher, Ning knew that all he could do was guide them on their paths. Fortunately for them, Ning’s own path was that of the Omega Sword Dao. His Dao was like a tall, sturdily-built house, and his guidance was the best guidance possible.

“This is the world of the Sword Shack.” Ning waved his hand, causing ten black loops that glowed with runic lines to fly towards the ten.

“The Sword Shack is filled with countless sword-arts. Aside from the [Heartseal] sword-art of our master, Emperor Mirrorsnow, it also includes all foundations for the Dao of the Sword,” Ning said. In other words... it contained the foundations for his own Omega Dao. This was why he dared to make the claim that it contained ‘all foundations for the Dao of the Sword’.

“You can train in seclusion within the Sword Shack, but you must be tempered via adventuring through the outside world. Perhaps you will then be able to understand and find a path which truly belongs to you.”

“Thank you, senior apprentice-brother.” The ten disciples were all delighted.

“You are the only ones permitted inside the Sword Shack. If anyone else

tries to bind it, the estate-world inside will be automatically destroyed,” Ning said. “Thus, you must not give it to anyone else.”

“Understood.” Many of the ten mused that only a fool would give something like this to another!

Ning waved his hand again, causing a number of Dao-seals to fly out towards the ten as well. “These are Dao-seals which I personally forged. Some involve the Dao of the Sword, some involve the Dao of Space, some involve the Dao of Time, some involve heartforce, some involve the Dao of Karma... each of you shall have nine seals total, and they come in varying levels of power. Some are meant for escape, some are meant to kill foes, and some are used to scout and explore. Just three of them can be used to attack foes head-on,” Ning said. “When you go out adventuring, you must be careful and also conserve your Dao-seals. If you use them all up, I’m not going to just remake them for you.”

These ten disciples were all overjoyed, but they also felt stunned. Daolord Darknorth had personally forged them? Forging Dao-seals was fairly easy, and many major powers were capable of it, but the cost was quite high as only valuable materials could be used to store such incredible levels of power. And... more importantly, the creator of the Dao-seal had to understand the Daos he was infusing into each seal.

In other words... if their senior apprentice-brother Darknorth created that many Dao-seals for them, he must have reached inconceivable heights in the Dao of the Sword, the Dao of Space, the Dao of Time, the Dao of Karma, and multiple other Daos!

“Here are a hundred million cubes of chaos nectar for each of you.” Ning waved his hand, causing a few more storage-type treasures to fly out.

“Here are some top-grade Eternal swords which have been made in accordance with your own specific insights into the Dao of the Sword. Each of you can have six.” Ning waved his hand again, causing a total of sixty swords to fly out towards the ten.

Top-grade Eternal treasures? Ning had a literal mountain of these things. In truth, every single Hegemon had piles and piles of top-grade

Eternal treasures. Ning was far wealthier than most Hegemons. Not only had he blackmailed multiple Hegemons and killed Hegemon Winterflame, he had also accumulated a terrifying amount of treasure when he had swept through the Jadefire Realm. He had a total of six Universe treasures! Alas, none of them were swords.

“I’ve already given you everything I can and should. Sword-arts, divine abilities, secret arts... you’ll find them all within the Sword Shack,” Ning said. “If you want to earn them, go into the Sword Shack and fight for them. Go now. I’ve already set up estates for you within Vastheaven Palace. Calm your minds and train hard. You can come find me if you have any questions... but remember, each of you will only have ten opportunities!”

“Understood.” The ten fellow disciples all departed excitedly.

“What an absolute fortune.”

“Each of us was given a hundred million cubes!”

“Perhaps ordinary Daolords of the Fourth Step might feel pain at giving away a billion cubes of chaos nectar, but senior apprentice-brother treats Hegemons as equals. He’s able to toss out such sums without batting an eye.”

“Ah! The Sword Shack has a prayer mat inside. When my Primaltwin sat down upon it, its cultivation speed increased dramatically. This thing is far more valuable than the cubes of chaos nectar!” While journeying towards their estates, these ten ‘fellow disciples’ began to discover how marvelous the prayer mat was. All of them were stunned by it. There were many Eternal Emperors who would be envious of such a treasure!

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Most of the treasures which Ning had prepared for his fifth disciple Boundless and his sixth disciple Muse were on par with what the other ten had been given. The only difference lay in the Sword Shack.

“Before you become Samsara Daolords, the two of you shall also have ten chances to come ask me for instruction,” Ning said. “Therefore, you

should train hard within the Sword Shack. Do your best to resolve your questions on your own. If you find that you can make no progress at all, come find me.”

“Understood.” Boundless and Muse were incredibly respectful.

“You can go now,” Ning instructed, and the two immediately departed obediently.

Upon seeing everyone finally leave, the nearby Hegemon Azurefiend finally spoke up: “Darknorth, don’t you think you are just a bit too casual when it comes to teaching your students?”

“I can guide them, but providing them with overly detailed tutelage will actually constrain their growth,” Ning said. “It’ll be far more helpful for them if they can find answers to their questions on their own, rather than come to me for everything. Besides... the ‘Sword Shack’ I created for them can be viewed as half a teacher as well.”

“You might be overestimating your disciples a bit. Most of them have merely devised multiple Supreme Daos and have yet to even fuse them together. Not everyone is as freakishly talented as you, you know.” Azurefiend shook his head.

“Well... if they just can’t progress, then they can live in mediocrity.” Ning smiled. By its very nature, the Dao of the Sword required one to advance without looking back and to act in accordance with one’s own nature. How could one possibly become a major power if someone was always yammering at him about what he should do? Even though he was their teacher, he couldn’t interfere too much in their choices.

Besides... the more famous a teacher was, the greater his influence would be on his students. He had to be careful, and he couldn’t provide them with excessive guidance. If he did, he might end up causing his students to depart from the path which actually suited them the most. The path which was best for Ning wasn’t necessarily the path which was best for his students.

However... just letting them roam freely wasn’t an option either. This was why Ning had chosen to create the Sword Shack, which he had

infused with the foundations of virtually all paths one could take in the Dao of the Sword. He would let his disciples choose the path which suited them the most.

Although it looked as though Ning was acting in a casual fashion, in reality he had put a lot of effort and consideration into how he was going to teach the disciples he had chosen. This was true for both his personal disciples and the disciples he had chosen on behalf of Emperor Mirrorsnow. Yes, he was technically just their 'senior apprentice-brother', but in reality he was like their master. This was why Ning had worked so hard to create all those different types of Dao-seals for them, which would be enough to allow them to deal with all sorts of strange predicaments. They were more than enough for the types of adventures which World-level cultivators would get into.

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After having accepted all these disciples, Ning led Flamewing, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw in departing from the Flamedragon Realmverse once more. This time, they were going to go on a very distant journey to a place outside the demesnes of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance.

As for his disciples? Ning's avatar would be permanently stationed at Vastheaven Palace and would keep an eye on everything which happened in Flamedragon Realmverse. Thus, it could also teach and guide the disciples.

Whoosh. The realmship continued its advance through the endless Great Dark. Inside the realmship, Azurefiend and Flamewing were gorging on a veritable sea of food, while Whitethaw quietly stood guard over Ning. Ning, in turn, was pondering while holding onto a jade slip.

Realmslord Windgrace had given him this slip, and it included all the information he had acquired regarding the dangerous place he was about to visit.

"The Icewind Sea?" Ning mused silently. The Icewind Sea was a place which Realmslord Windgrace and his peers had scouted out in the past,

and they were the ones who had chosen this name.

The Icewind Sea could be described in one word – cold! However, it was a place which gave birth to quite a few fire-aligned treasures, with the Daomerge Firecloud Flower being one of them. This was also the treasure which Ning valued the most highly.

Chapter 32: Icewind Sea

“Realmslord Windgrace and his peers have ventured inside the Icewind Sea in the past, and they encountered a Sourcewalker who was at the Otherverse Lord level of power when they were there.” Ji Ning nodded. “Within the realms of what we can handle. Although he’s beyond myself and Azurefiend, so long as we have Flamewing with us we can deal with him with ease. However, this Sourcewalker has lived within the Icewind Sea and is able to make use of its local environs. It’ll be quite difficult to deal with.”

“We have to be careful. If we let it catch us offguard and ambush us, both I and Azurefiend will both be at risk of dying,” Ning mused.

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The realmship warped through spacetime for over half a million years before finally reaching the distant ‘Icewind Sea’.

“How beautiful.” Ning, Azurefiend, Whitethaw, and Flamewing stood within the realmship, staring in amazement at the beautiful scenes outside.

The endless Great Dark should be filled with nothing but darkness. It was an empty, lonely place without even a hint of light... but now, an enormous silvery-white vortex-world had appeared before them. A fierce, icy gale was howling throughout the region, forming an icy maelstrom of absolutely inconceivable size around it. Although Ning’s group was able to see it with the naked eye, they were actually still extremely far away from it. This vortex had to be comparable in size to an entire territory!

“The Icewind Sea,” Ning murmured softly.

“What an enormous sea of cold energy. I feel as though endless amounts of freezing energy have gathered around this area,” Azurefiend said with an amazed sigh. “Although I’ve visited many realmverses and seen quite a few dangerous places, this truly is my first time seeing such an enormous conglomeration of cold energy.”

Ning concurred, “Normal realmverses are filled with lightning, wind, light, darkness, and all types of other energy. That’s why life is able to flourish and take root! In addition, the various streams of energy will be fairly docile and not too agitated... but the cold energy here has spread out to cover an entire territory in size! We could take all of the cold energy out of the Flamedragon Realmverse and put it here, and it still wouldn’t be as dense as this.”

“Weaker Eternal Emperors would probably be frozen to death,” Azurefiend said with a laugh. “That’s why this place, filled with such freezing might, is capable of giving birth to so many inconceivable treasures. Realmverses are quite plain and ordinary by comparison, which means they are unable to give birth to truly remarkable treasures.”

“I don’t like this place,” the nearby Flamewing muttered.

“We’ll leave right after I harvest the Daomerge Firecloud Flower,” Ning consoled.

Whoosh. The realmship began to engage in short-distance warps. It soon arrived at the borders to the Icewind Sea.

Slash. Slash. Slash. The furious wind howled against the realmship, striking against it as though it was formed from icy knives. The realmship was in peak condition and thus was able to endure the attacks with ease, but its flight path became slightly twisted.

“This wind is far too powerful,” Azurefiend muttered.

“We learned long ago from this jade slip that we must pass through this tempest layer if we wish to reach the continent inside the Icewind Sea,” Ning said.

The Icewind Sea was called a ‘sea’ but it wasn’t an actual sea. It was actually an absolutely enormous iceberg which naturally attracted all of the surrounding cold energy of the Chaosverse in an extremely large area. This was why such a terrifying vortex had appeared around it. This terrifying vortex was capable of killing even weaker Eternal Emperors. This sort of extreme environment was highly inhospitable for ordinary lifeforms to enter or live in.

Only Hegemons and Otherverse Lords and other major powers on or above their level would dare to enter a place like this.

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There was no way to teleport through spacetime within the tempest layer. The only option was to slowly fly through it.

Under Ning's control, the realmship slowly stabilized as it followed the wind inwards. Given Ning's mastery over the Dao of Wind and the Dao of Lightning, the realmship was able to maintain its incredible speeds as it pressed onwards. Alas, the tempest layer was simply so vast that flying through it would take time.

They flew at top speed for over ninety thousand years.

"Look! There's a planet up ahead," Azurefiend called out.

"A planet?" Flamewing turned to look, then smirked. "That's not a planet, that's just a hunk of ice." Indeed, it was a piece of ice that was billions of kilometers in diameter which was flying through the tempest layer at high speeds.

"Let's move over and take a look. According to Realmslord Windgrace's records, these planet-sized hunks of ice all broke free from the main Windsea 'continent' and often have marvelous treasures hidden within them." Ning smiled. "If we're lucky, we might even find a Daomerge Firecloud Fruit." Ning and the others were quite patient; even if they spent a few dozen chaos cycles hunting for the Daomerge Firecloud Fruit, it would be fine.

Rumble... as the realmship drew closer, a wave of chaotic force suddenly swept across the realmship, causing it to tremble. It took Ning nearly an hour before they were finally able to successfully land on the ice 'planet'.

This ice planet had its own gravitational field which repelled the tempest outside of it. As a result, things were quite calm on the surface of the planet.

"Whew. We finally made it out." Azurefiend flew out, rather excited. Ning put away the realmship and then descended as well. This was a

world of nothing but ice; even the ‘ground’ was solid ice!

“The ice...?” Ning made a casual grabbing motion towards the ground, causing a claw-shadow to sweep out against the icy ground. He wanted to forcibly tear out a chunk of it, but the only result was a clacking sound as a few scratches appeared on the ice.

“It’s that tough?” Ning was rather amazed. It looked as though he would have to put some real effort into it. He waved a finger, causing a streak of sword-light to fly out and carve a large hole in the ground, digging out a large chunk of ice. The ice then flew straight towards Ning, who reached out to touch it. He could sense the terrifying cold within the ice.

Ning couldn’t help but feel speechless. This was far colder than some of the famous types of mystic ice which existed in the Flamedragon Realmverse, and it was far tougher as well. His claw-strike had failed to pull anything out of it. In the end, he had been forced to exert 50% of his full power to carve this piece out.

Azurefiend’s voice suddenly rang out from off in the distance: “What the hell type of ice is this? It’s incredibly tough! I’m a freaking Hegemon, but I wasn’t able to break it apart by stomping on it!”

“This ice is everywhere. Don’t worry about it for now. Hurry up and search this place. Let’s see if we can find any treasures,” Ning said.

“Yes, Master,” Whitethaw said.

“I’ll go search as well.” Flamewing returned to his usual form, excitedly spreading his wings and then flying into the air. It had been quite some time since he had flown about in such a manner.

As for Ning, he began to search this place using his powers over spacetime. Godsense was of no use; every part of the Icewind Sea was filled with such an overwhelming aura of limitless cold that even godsense was suppressed, making it impossible for him to search too far with it.

“Eh?” Ning scanned the area, his gaze seeing past space and time as he scoured the place. “That’s a lot of treasure.” Ning quickly found certain treasures which lay within some fairly well-hidden places.

He saw a completely crystalline-looking tree of ice, a warm jewel, a fiery-red clump of grass, and more. Ning was able to name some of them, but most were completely foreign to him. All of them were clearly quite valuable. However, Ning was so incredibly wealthy by now that he didn't really care about these treasures. Most likely, all of the treasures he had discovered would be at most compared to the networth of an ordinary Eternal Emperor. Still... this was a testament to what an incredible place the Icewind Sea was and how many treasures it held!

However, this was a place so dangerous that even someone like Realmslord Windgrace would only enter after calling a few friends to help out.

"Master! Master!" Flamewing let out an excited cry, his voice forcibly tearing through the suppressive effect of the terrifying aura of cold. Ning was able to hear him clearly from afar.

"Flamewing, what happened?!" Ning immediately moved, transforming into a streak of light as he flew straight towards Flamewing. Flamewing was standing within an icy gorge.

"Master, take a look! Do you see that?" Flamewing was rather excited, and he flapped his wing a few times as he pointed towards the front.

Ning hurriedly looked, only to see a series of long slender green leaves that were each three meters long. They were all growing slanted alongside the distant, icy-jade walls of the gorge. There had to be hundreds of those leaves, and there was a fruit at the very center of them. This fruit was completely azure in color, and it emanated a particularly pungent smell.

"Incense Spirit-Fruit?" Ning was rather amazed. This fruit was the second-ranked Daomerge treasure, but it clearly wasn't ripe yet. Fully ripened Incense Spirit-Fruit was flecked with red and would emanate an absolutely alluring aroma which would cause even Hegemons to drool. For many major powers, Incense Spirit-Fruit was primarily considered a delicacy to be eaten. How many Daolords could possibly procure such a treasure, after all?

"So the Icewind Sea has Incense Spirit-Fruit within it?" Ning was very

surprised. When Realmslord Windgrace had come here, he hadn't found any Incense Spirit-Fruit. However, the Icewind Sea was a very large place; there had to be many places here which the Realmslord had yet to visit.

"Haha." Hegemon Azurefiend flew over as well. He stared at the Incense Spirit-Fruit, then laughed, "Darknorth, your luck isn't bad. We've just entered the Icewind Sea and haven't even landed on the main continent, and you've already discovered some Incense Spirit-Fruit on an iceberg planet floating at the very outskirts. Given your crazy luck, you will probably be able to find the Daomerge Cloudfire Flower after all."

"Right." Ning nodded. Judging from the information Realmslord Windgrace had provided, Incense Spirit-Fruit would probably be of very limited use to him. However, it was still far more valuable than a Voidsea Jadeseal and still could be considered a valuable treasure.

Chapter 33: Descending Upon the Continent

After an hour, Ji Ning and his team had finished fully scouting out this ice planet. They didn't find any Daomerge Firecloud Flowers, while they only found a single Incense Spirit-Fruit. They did find quite a number of other marvelous items.

"There was nothing?" The Flamewing God continued to fly about the skies like a streak of light, unwilling to admit defeat as he continued the search.

"Forget it, Flamewing. This ice planet was nothing more than a tiny fragment of the Icewind Sea continent. We should feel lucky that we even found a single Incense Spirit-Fruit," Ning called out loudly.

Whoosh. Flamewing descended and transformed into human form. He stared at the floating azure fruit before them, then muttered, "It isn't even ripe yet. I wonder how long it would take for it to fully ripen."

"Judging from the looks of it, it'll take roughly ten thousand chaos cycles to fully ripen," Ning estimated with a smile. "But that's simple." Ning stepped forward to set up a formation around the spirit-fruit, causing spacetime to accelerate. As time began to speed up around the spirit-fruit, it began to absorb increasingly greater amounts of energy from the surrounding area.

Ning couldn't just harvest it right away, as fruits like this could only develop in highly specific environments! Even if Ning moved it over to another part of the Icewind Sea, he still might not be able to ensure its survival.

"I'll accelerate time around it by a rate of 3000x. If I increase it any further, the rate of energy absorption will destroy the entire frozen gorge," Ning said. Powerful cultivators were living beings, making it extremely difficult to accelerate time for them. The Incense Spirit-Fruit, however, was just a type of unique vegetable. Given Ning's mastery over the Dao of

Time and the Dao of Formations, he would be able to easily accelerate time by even a rate of 10,000,000x. Slowing down time wasn't too hard either. His main worry was that if he accelerated time too fast, the environment wouldn't be able to provide the Incense Spirit-Fruit with enough energy.

"Thankfully, the Incense Spirit-Fruit will maintain its potency indefinitely after ripening." Ning shook his head. "If it was like the Daomerge Firecloud Flower, which must be used within a thousand years after it ripens, it would be a pain to deal with."

"The Daomerge Firecloud Flower has a far more powerful effect. Of course it also comes with more stringent requirements," Azurefiend said.

Ning scanned the area one final time, then said: "Let's go. If we have enough time, we can come back after a few chaos cycles." Ning and the others boarded the realmship, then departed from this ice planet and entered the tempest once more.

Because Ning had personally set up a formation on the planet, he was able to sense its location even as they flew farther and farther away from the ice planet.

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Whooooosh. A wild wind howled ravenously through the void, causing even Ning and the others to have a limited field of vision. All of them were staring at the outside, but there was nothing but a haze blocking their sight.

Still, judging from how powerful the infinitely cold aura radiating from the icy sea of energy was in each direction, they were able to sense the general direction of the main continent.

Time flowed on, one year at a time. The realmship continued to fly forwards at maximum speed, while Ning and his team remained within the warm interior, eating and drinking. Ning and Azurefiend often discussed the Dao with each other. Ning's advantage was that he was skilled in many Daos, while Azurefiend was a Hegemon. They occasionally gained insights from their discussions with each other.

They spent over 150,000,000 years slowly flying through the tempest. During this time, they only encountered one additional ice planet. Alas, this one didn't have any treasures which intrigued Ning at all, and the total value of the materials they found on it was perhaps at most comparable to an Archon's networth. Ning naturally didn't care at all.

"Here we are." Ning revealed a smile as he rose to his feet.

"We've made it already?" Flamewing, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw all looked towards the outside, only to see an utterly vast iceworld that was a bit hard to make out due to the storm. This was a world that was unfathomably vaster than the two planet-sized pieces of ice they had encountered previously.

"Starting from today, all of us must be careful. Especially you, Flamewing; don't cause any trouble!" Ning instructed. "The Icewind Sea is quite massive; so long as we remain cautious, we might be able to avoid detection by Sourcewalkers."

"What have we to fear?" Flamewing was unhappy. "Master, based on what Realmslord Windgrace told us, the Sourcewalkers of the Icewind Sea are at most comparable to Otherverse Lords in power. I can beat the crap out of any of them!"

"Obey my commands." Ning frowned. He was afraid of Flamewing causing trouble. Azurefiend was a Hegemon; he would definitely be extremely cautious in such a terrifying place as the Icewind Sea. The Protector Whitethaw went without saying; he would obey all orders unquestioningly. Flamewing, however... Ning might have tamed him, but he was still like a child. He might just go crazy and start causing chaos.

Flamewing lowered his head and started to mumble to itself.

"The Sourcewalkers might be a bit weaker than you, but they've lived in the Icewind Sea for an extremely long period of time and understand it much better than us. They might use the local environment against us. If Azurefiend and I aren't careful, they might end up ambushing and killing us before you can do anything," Ning explained.

"I'll make sure to protect you and keep you safe, Master," Flamewing

said hurriedly.

“Also keep in mind that Realmslord Windgrace and the others only explored a small part of the Icewind Sea. There might be other unknown dangers here,” Ning said seriously. “That’s why you have to obey my orders.”

“Oh.” When Flamewing saw the serious look on Ning’s face, he nodded obediently. “I’ll do exactly what you tell me to do. If you tell me to fly, I definitely won’t walk on the ground. If you tell me to walk on the ground, I definitely won’t fly.”

Ning secretly let out a sigh of relief. Without Flamewing, he and Azurefiend would never dare to enter a place like the Icewind Sea. That’s why he had to make sure that Flamewing obeyed all of his orders; if they weren’t careful, they could very well die.

“Come, let’s keep going,” Ning said.

“The Icewind Sea!” Azurefiend was quite excited as well.

By now, the realmship had already landed upon the infinitely vast continent of ice. Ning and the other three flew out, then scanned their surroundings.

As far as they could see, the vast icy world around them seemed quiet and calm. However, a few vortexes rising into the skies could occasionally be seen. Given their ocular prowess, they were able to see to a distance of a trillion kilometers. Even there, they saw over ten thousand vortexes spiraling into the skies and merging into the tempest layer above.

“Scout the area out and find all treasures that are hidden here. Remember, stay close to each other and don’t run around,” Ning said. The four began to scout the place carefully by themselves...

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This vast continent of ice had gorges, canyons, mountains, and more. However, everything was completely made out of ice!

The ice continent was almost as large as an entire territory in size. As a

result, it had its own systemized ‘laws’, to the point where it had its own prime essences! Much like how the (much-smaller) everworlds had their own laws and essences, this vast continent did as well. Although it was merely the size of the Badlands Territory or Vastheaven Territory, its total energy levels surpassed that of entire otherverses!

It had its own laws and its own prime essences. Once a cultivator took control over the prime essences of an otherverse, that cultivator would become known as an ‘Otherverse Lord’. However, there was no way for anyone to take control over the prime essences of the Icewind Sea. Not even the Sourcewalkers who had lived in here since time immemorial were capable of it! The Sourcewalkers had merely been blessed by the prime essences of the Chaosverse, who had been enraged by the manner in which the Sithe had invaded and looted so many sacred sites. As a result, the Sourcewalkers were able to borrow some of the power from the sacred sites, causing the Sithe to suffer great losses as a result.

“If a Sourcewalker was able to take control over the entire Icewind Sea, then even Flamewing would be of no use. It might be able to stay alive, but the rest of us would probably be wiped out instantaneously.” After wandering the Icewind Sea for just a single year, Azurefiend found enough treasures to rival an ordinary Hegemon’s networth. This caused him to feel stunned as to how marvelous the Icewind Sea was.

“The Sithe were too proud and too ravenous, causing even the prime essences of the Chaosverse to feel enraged. That’s why the Sourcewalkers were granted power from these sacred places.” Ning smiled. “Ever since the Sithe were destroyed, there have been no further tales of Sourcewalkers being able to control such power.”

Suddenly, Ning’s Immortal energy flared out. Swish! It grabbed the other three, then brought them with Ning as he warped to the edges of a distant gorge.

Even ice planets had their own chaotic gravitational fields, preventing Ning and the others from warping through spacetime. The great ice continent, however, was extremely stable and had its own system of laws. The only places where things were chaotic were those vast vortexes which

rose into the skies; there, warping through spacetime was impossible. Thus, Ning and the others engaged in fairly short warp teleports, ensuring that they were able to avoid those places. This process was still far faster than flying normally.

“Hm?” When the four arrived in the air above the canyon, they all peered downwards into it.

“I don’t see a Daomerge Firecloud Flower.” Azurefiend shook his head.

“I don’t sense any Fire-type energy at all,” Flamewing agreed.

This gorge was the place where Realmslord Windgrace and the others had discovered that Daomerge Firecloud Flower. Ning and the others had been making haste towards it, although of course they would’ve been pleased to find another flower midway.

One years... two years... three years. Ning and his team continued to advance through the Icewind Sea, searching for the flower Ning needed. They encountered and picked up a number of valuable fruits, but most were unripe. In addition, they were afraid to harvest too much, for fear of being discovered by the Sourcewalkers.

Chapter 34: Sourcewalkers

Another 129 years went by in the blink of an eye.

Whoooosh. A vortex could be seen rising into the skies in the distance, causing spacetime to be twisted and distorted. Ji Ning and the other three were in a cave close to the margins of the vortex, peering towards it.

Azurefiend murmured softly, “According to what Realmslord Windgrace said, the most precious materials are all located deep inside the vortexes, which connect to the very deepest underground tunnels. Darknorth, shall we go in and take a look?”

“No need. Our target is the Daomerge Firecloud Flower! There’s no need for us to enter the depths of those vortexes,” Ning said. “If we do go in, we would be easily discovered by the Sourcewalkers.”

“Alright.” Azurefiend didn’t argue, even though he really did want to go in and give it a try. They hadn’t picked up many treasures in the past few years, as they were afraid that scouring too much would result in them being discovered, but even so the few treasures Azurefiend had picked up were worth two or three times more than his previous networth. Thus, he wanted to go into the depths of the abyss and search for even rarer treasures... but the only way he could do that was if he relied on Ning’s Flamewing God.

“The other valley Realmslord Windgrace mentioned isn’t too far away. We should be able to reach it in around thirty years,” Ning said. “Let us continue.”

Daomerge Firecloud Flowers were simply too rare. They had searched for many years but found nothing at all. They did find another Incense Spirit-Fruit, but unfortunately it was yet another unripened one.

Ning and the others had only walked for the time needed to boil a kettle of tea when suddenly... boom! A blurry black light suddenly appeared beneath their feet, oozing out of the icy ground and forming into curved lines that stretched out trillions of kilometers.

“Not good. That’s a formation.” Ning’s face tightened. “An alarm formation.”

“We’ve been discovered.” Hegemon Azurefiend was shocked as well.

Rumble... an enormous earth-shaking boom rang out in the distance as the ground began to crack apart. A titanic mountain-sized ice humanoid emerged from the ground, using his two hands to tear through it as he rose from the depths.

Ning’s gaze narrowed. The ice here was so tough that if he didn’t use his Northbow swords, he’d need to use roughly 50% of his full power to break through it. Most likely, fairly powerful Archons would have to use 100% of their full power to just barely break through the ice. This person, however, had been able to instantly tear through the ground with his bare hands. This terrifying level of strength alone showed that this creature was vastly stronger than Hegemons. Most likely, he was at the Otherverse Lord level of power.

“That’s the Sourcewalker,” Ning sent mentally.

“Sourcewalker?” Azurefiend’s face turned pale.

“He finally came!” Flamewing, on the other hand, was excited. It really hated the Icewind Sea, as every single part of this place was filled with uncomfortable icy energy. When it saw the Sourcewalker, it instantly grew excited.

The Sourcewalker before them was covered in a layer of extremely thick ice which served as a form of icy armor which glowed with azure light. His head was covered with a helmet that had two icicles protruding from it, and he had long azure hair which fell down to his waist. He had a great deal of facial hair, and his gloomy azure eyes were filled with rage and violence.

“More of you thieves, come to steal my treasures!” The Sourcewalker let out a furious bellow, his voice transforming into a wind of terrifying power which swept out in every direction. The endless might in his voice alone caused Ning and Azurefiend to quail. The difference in power was simply too great.

“We ran into a Sourcewalker before we even found a Daomerge Firecloud Flower. What terrible luck.” Ning felt rather resigned. They hadn’t even gone into any of the vortexes or deep underground, where the treasures were more abundant and more valuable. That was where the Sourcewalkers usually resided.

“Sourcewalker,” Ning called out loudly, “We’ve come here just for the sake of finding a Daomerge Firecloud Flower! Its not all that valuable, and we’re willing to use our own treasures to trade for one. We’ll leave immediately after acquiring the flower.”

Daomerge Firecloud Flowers were incredible treasures for Daolords, but they were fairly ordinary when compared to the other treasures of the Icewind Sea. There were treasures here which would drive even Hegemons and Otherverse Lords mad with excitement.

“A Daomerge Firecloud Flower?” The ice-armored Sourcewalker was 540,000 meters tall. It stared downwards at Ning’s group and said angrily, “You can forget about taking away so much as a piece of ice from my turf! All you cultivators are nothing more than damnable thieves. This is my territory!”

“We can trade for it with our treasures!” Ning said frantically.

“Treasures? What use do I have for your miserable treasures?” The Sourcewalker took a furious step forwards, then shot forwards through the air: “Just die instead!”

Ning felt speechless. This Sourcewalker was just as Realmslord Windgrace had described; a berserker!

Whoosh. The Sourcewalker wielded a long frozen halberd which gleamed with azure light, sweeping it towards Ning’s group with such power that Ning had no choice but to instruct Flamewing to defend. “Flamewing, go!”

“Haha... I was at the verge of losing my patience!” The chubby Flamewing instantly let out an excited cry as it reverted to its true form, transforming into the titanic Flamewing God. Its giant flaming wings spread out fully as its body became bathed in furious flames that were so

powerful, even the frigid energy of the surrounding area was pushed away. Everything within ten billion kilometers began to grow blazingly hot.

Otherverses had their own prime essences, as did the Icewind Sea... and in a sense, the Flamewing God itself had its own prime essences! Its energy levels truly were virtually inexhaustible, and its body was virtually indestructible. Ever since it was born, it had wandered the Chaosverse and had devoured entire realmverses with ease. Truly, its power was inconceivable. Its only weakness was that its level of insight was extremely, extremely low. If it was just a bit more clever, it would be able to massacre even Otherverse Lords with ease.

Still, all things came in balance. There was no way even the prime essences of the Chaosverse could give birth to creatures as powerful as Chaos Primordials which also had the comprehension skills of Sourcewalkers. This was completely impossible.

“A Chaos Primordial?” The attacking Sourcewalker was rather stunned when it saw those vast wings unfurl and the flames spread out in every direction around the Flamewing God.

“Haha, I’ve never eaten a Sourcewalker before!” Flamewing howled through the skies, while Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw all immediately moved to hide within the realmship. They weren’t qualified to get involved in a battle of this magnitude.

“This is my first time meeting a Chaos Primordial as well. Let’s do this!” The Sourcewalker was just as eager to do battle, and he valiantly charged forwards with his halberd at the ready.

Swoosh! His halberd suddenly pierced forwards, howling through the skies with incredible speed... but Flamewing was even faster! The strike missed, just barely managing to scrape past Flamewing’s claws but not injuring Flamewing in the slightest.

“Up you go!” The Sourcewalker suddenly changed his stance. Previously, he had been using the halberd to ‘stab’ at Flamewing; now, he suddenly lifted it upwards!

This was a strike that seemed to split even the heavens in two. Not even

Flamewing was able to avoid this strike... but of course, Flamewing wouldn't deign to do so.

Boom! Flamewing had already been flying through the air; this strike sent it stumbling a few hundred kilometers higher.

The Sourcewalker was shocked. When he had used this killer technique against the cultivator Otherverse Lords he had fought, they had all been knocked backwards and suffered heavy injuries. The Chaos Primordial had merely stumbled a bit?

"Grwaaaar!" Flamewing excitedly flapped its wings, instantly charging downwards while using its enormous and thick claws to strike at the Sourcewalker. The Sourcewalker hurriedly brandished his halberd, spinning it into a circle that defended against the approaching attack.

Flamewing completely ignored the profundity of his opponent's attack, just striking down with its claws in an absolutely savage blow. BOOM! An enormous collision rang out as the earth itself began to split apart. As for the Sourcewalker, half of its body had just been hammered into the ground from this collision.

"I ablated over 90% of its power, but it still suppressed me completely?" The Sourcewalker was rather speechless at this result. Moments later, the look within its eyes grew even more frenzied. "Again!"

Boom. Boom. Boom! The Sourcewalker was incredibly valiant. At first, it chose to meet all of Flamewing's attacks head on, but later on it began to choose to dodge instead in an effort to win through technique. In terms of comprehension, it was already at the Archon level of insight. Due to its innate gifts, this level of insight was already enough for it to unleash the Otherverse Lord level of power in battle! Supposedly, the legendary Sourcewalkers who could fight even Sithe Exalts were actually just at the Hegemonic level of insight.

Then again, the Hegemonic level of insight was an incredibly high level. Realmslord Windgrace, the Lonely King, and the other major powers were all at this level of insight. The only thing above this level was Autarchy.

Every so often, the Sourcewalker was sent slamming into the nearby

mountains, hammered into the ground, or smashed so hard that it created deep craters and gouges in the earth beneath it.

Clearly, after Flamewing became a bit more accustomed to the way in which the Sourcewalker fought, Flamewing became able to completely dominate it in battle. The Sourcewalker had even lost his helmet, and his azure hair fluttered about wildly. He continued to roar with fury, but it was clear that he was being crushed in this fight. However, the icy armor that covered his upper body remained completely unscathed. It was quite a marvelous item.

“Darknorth, the Sourcewalker can’t hold back Flamewing.” Azurefiend chuckled merrily as he watched from within the realmship. “The Sourcewalker will probably retreat soon. If this fight continues, it’ll be nothing but bad news for him.”

Ning smiled and nodded as well. He was still going to be able to find the Daomerge Firecloud Flower.

Boom! Boom! Boom! At first, the Sourcewalker had been filled with a towering desire to do battle, but after being dominated for so long it was beginning to feel rather miserable. It had been a long, long time since it had felt this miserable.

His body wasn’t nearly as tough as a Chaos Primordial’s, but it was still vastly better than the bodies of cultivators. Thus, when he encountered cultivators like Realmslord Windgrace, he was able to chase down the cultivators and beat them down as he pleased. It had been quite some time since it had suffered in a fight like this.

After being slammed into a mountain yet again, the Sourcewalker angrily raised his head. His long azure hair fluttered in the wind as he roared, “Big brother! Hurry up and come out, I’m getting killed here!” His roar was like thunder, and it shook the world around them.

“Big brother?” Within the realmship, Ning and Azurefiend’s eyes both bulged out. “He has a big brother?” Ning couldn’t help but feel rather dazed.

Chapter 35: Clash

“I thought you enjoyed fighting and causing a ruckus. Why are you asking me for help this time?” An icy voice rang out, shaking the world around them as the icy ground off in the distance suddenly split apart. An enormous crevice appeared, followed by a similarly towering figure emerging from it. This figure was dressed in long black robes that had silver patterns embroidered on them. His black hair fell down to his waist. He looked fairly handsome, but his eyes were ice cold. It felt as though there was nothing capable of stirring or shaking his heart.

He slowly walked over, causing an invisible wave of pressure to push down upon Ji Ning and Azurefiend. Both turned pale.

“This black-robed Sourcewalker is far more powerful than the other one,” Ning mused.

“Gwaaaaar! Another one? I’ll eat this one, then I’ll eat you!”

The fire blazing around Flamewing towered ever-higher as the boundless sea of flames around him swept outwards. He flapped his wings, once more charging towards the increasingly-battered armored Sourcewalker.

“Big brother!” The armored Sourcewalker was terrified, hurriedly dodging while flying towards his big brother. The black-robed Sourcewalker took a single step forwards, moving to block in front of his little brother.

“Fuck off!” The black-robed Sourcewalker stretched out both hands simultaneously, causing a strange, gloomy black light to appear from his palms which seemed capable of devouring everything in the world. As for Flamewing, he continued to charge forwards with brute force as he sent his giant fleshy claws towards the black light.

BOOM! The twin palms met the twin claws head-on. Both were extremely confident in their abilities.

The black-robed Sourcewalker’s face tightened slightly as he hurriedly

took a few steps back, each step causing the icy ground beneath him to crack and shatter. He had to retreat a total of eight steps before coming to a halt. As for Flamewing, it was also knocked flying backwards. It had to hurriedly flap its wings a few times before stabilizing itself in midair.

“What?! He’s actually able to fight Flamewing head-on to a standstill?” Ning, watching from within the distant realmship, felt rather stunned. Although Flamewing seemed to have a slight advantage, the difference in power was clearly minimal.

“This Sourcewalker is as powerful as that?!” Azurefiend was shocked as well. “Chaos Primordials can effortlessly dominate even Otherverse Lords and Golden Emperors! It took three Sithe Exalts working together to catch the Flamewing God. For this Sourcewalker to be able to fight Flamewing to a standstill means that it is probably quite close in power to the Sithe Exalts.”

“Be careful, Flamewing!” Ning immediately sent mentally. “Don’t be overconfident.”

“Wow!” Flamewing let out a strange cry in midair, the scales on its body standing up like the hair on a cat. An excited look was in its eyes as it howled, “You are pretty strong, Sourcewalker! The only foes I’ve ever met who are stronger than you were those Sithe Exalts. However... you still aren’t a match for me!”

“I’ve long heard of how powerful Chaos Primordials are... but now, it seems, you aren’t all that impressive.” The black-robed Sourcewalker remained quite confident in his chances. He leapt forwards, once more charging towards Flamewing.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Both transformed into blurs as they fought against each other at high speeds. The black-robed Sourcewalker had clearly chosen to stop using the clumsy method of meeting Flamewing blow-for-blow, as that was simply too exhausting. Unlike the Chaos Primordial, he didn’t have endless reservoirs of energy. However, he clearly was highly superior on a technical level, and so he chose to use his superior techniques to deal with Flamewing, using all sorts of defensive techniques

to ablate and draw away Flamewing's power, causing Flamewing to begin to struggle a little bit.

"You still aren't a match for me!" Flamewing let out a loud bellow as it finally went crazy. SWISH! Its speed instantly skyrocketed to its absolute maximum.

"That's fast." The black-robed Sourcewalker's face tightened.

Riiiiip! Flamewing pounced towards its foe at terrifying speeds, its fierce claws tearing through the air. The black-robed Sourcewalker hurriedly moved to defend. Just as it was about to counter-attack, Flamewing suddenly flew away, then arced back from afar to once more assault him.

Swish! Swish! Swish! The skies became filled with countless streaks of flaming light. Flamewing was so incredibly fast that this was all that could be seen of him. There was no need for it to allow the black-robed Sourcewalker to fight back against it. It relied on its raw speed to launch repeated and unanswered attacks, causing even the black-robed Sourcewalker to feel quite frustrated. Flamewing was simply too fast!

Flamewing's speed vastly surpassed the speed of any Hegemon. Even Hegemon Thunderstar, who was extremely skilled in speed, was far from being a match for Flamewing; only when Hegemon Thunderstar was riding in his realmship was he able to just barely surpass Flamewing in speed. As for Ning, he was slower than Flamewing even in a realmship.

"It's too fast. Although I have a realmship, I still wouldn't be able to outpace it," the black-robed Sourcewalker mused. In the end, it had yet to reach Hegemony in terms of its insights. In contrast, Hegemon Thunderstar had become a Hegemon via the Dao of Lightning.

"Master! Master!" Flamewing sent mentally to Ning, "This Sourcewalker is a pain to deal with. I've yet to harm him at all, despite hitting him with everything I have. It doesn't look like he's using up too much energy. If this continues, he'll probably be able to continue holding on against me."

Although Flamewing had the initiative thanks to its speed, the black-robed Sourcewalker had reached such a high level of insight that he was still capable of protecting himself.

Ning instantly began to frown. What were they to do? Flamewing was extremely strong, having completely suppressed the first armored Sourcewalker and injuring him, causing his energy to deplete rapidly. As a result, the first Sourcewalker chose to flee after a brief bout! But this black-robed Sourcewalker... its only weakness lay in its speed. In all other aspects, it was Flamewing's equal; in fact, it actually had an advantage in close combat.

"You are pretty strong after all, Chaos Primordial. You'll make a good mount for me!" The black-robed Sourcewalker suddenly let out a laugh. "Arise!"

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Light began to shine all around them as power began to circulate through the area. Countless runic lines appeared in the icy earth around them as an enormous formation began to reveal itself. The entire area became blanketed in blurry light; clearly, this was a trapping formation.

"If I had to deal with you anywhere else, it'd probably be quite hard... but this is my turf. Admit defeat, Chaos Primordial." The black-robed Sourcewalker was extremely self-confident.

"Retreat, Flamewing," Ning sent mentally. Flamewing immediately flapped its wings and charged back towards Ning.

"Store the realmship into your estate-world, then obey my orders with regards to breaking this formation apart," Ning sent.

"Alright, Master." Flamewing was quite unhappy after having been trapped within the opponent's formation. It didn't really understand formations, given how low its level of insight was. All it could do was try to overwhelm the formation with raw power! Given that it was strong enough to dominate even Otherverse Lords, ordinary formations were no match for it. However, this was a formation that was controlled by a Sourcewalker that was every bit as strong as Flamewing; overpowering it

probably wasn't an option.

Whoosh. Flamewing put away the realmship. Even though Ning was now within Flamewing's estate-treasure, his gaze was still able to see past the dimensional barriers and into the world outside. This was primarily because Flamewing was in control of the estate-treasure. It didn't move to oppose Ning, and so Ning was able to see what was happening outside.

"This trap formation is a bit interesting, but defeating it won't be hard. Flamewing, given how strong you are, this is actually going to be easy." Ning felt quite confident. "Obey my commands."

The Dao of Formations was an incredibly difficult one, but Ning had reached terrifying heights in it. In all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, there was probably no one superior to him in this regard! When he had first unlocked the secrets behind the Jadefire Realm's formation-diagram, he had already reached the Archon level in the Dao of Formations. He had then spent another long period of time studying formations in order to unleash Flamewing, and as a result his insight into the Dao of Formations had deepened even further.

Swish! Flamewing transformed into an arced streak of light, flying through the blurry formation at high speed. It repeatedly changed directions, sometimes choosing to ram through certain points with raw force.

To break the entire formation through raw power was impossible for Flamewing, but Ning's level of mastery over the Dao of Formations was so high that he was able to find its weak spots with ease. To locate and then break through those weak spots was naturally quite simple.

Boom! Boom! Boom! A number of explosions could be heard in succession. The formation which the black-robed Sourcewalker had spent quite a bit of time setting up was instantly disrupted, and the surrounding area returned to its usual appearance. It was once again possible for everyone to clearly see the vast, icy world around them.

"Why did it break?! Big brother, your formation was so powerful that when I was trapped inside it, I had no idea how I was supposed to escape.

How was it breached like that?!” The armored Sourcewalker was rather dazed.

“You idiot. All you know how to do is fight. You know nothing of formations.” The black-robed Sourcewalker stared towards the fleeing Flamewing, his eyes shining. “It was actually able to disrupt my formation in the blink of an eye. There’s no way that Chaos Primordial could’ve accomplished it on its own; those things are legendary for their stupidity. That means that it had to have been one of the two cultivators in that realmship. So one of them is actually a grandmaster in the art of formations!”

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After breaking through the formation, Flamewing instantly grew excited. It let out an earth-shattering roar, then said: “Hey, Sourcewalker! Wasn’t your formation supposed to be really awesome? Why don’t you activate a few more and let’s see how they do?!”

Formations had to be set up in advance. The black-robed Sourcewalker had detected Ning’s group early on and thus had set up this formation before revealing himself. How could he suddenly manifest another powerful formation out of thin air?

“Gentlemen.” The black-robed Sourcewalker had an excited look in his eyes, and he said with a smile: “Do you think you can escape simply because you breached my formation?”

“Without your formations, do you think you can stop me?” Flamewing howled back, “Be good and hand over the Daomerge Firecloud Flower. Otherwise, I’m going to loot the entire Icewind Sea completely clean.”

“This place is my territory. You should play nice and listen to what I have to say.” A strange, rhomboid-covered globe suddenly flew out from the black-robed Sourcewalker’s forehead and into the air. Boom! A strange power which belonged to the Dao of Space suddenly swept out and covered the entire area, moving at such incredible speeds that it completely covered a trillion kilometers in the blink of an eye.

The entire region covered by this power completely changed. It had

transformed into a world of the starry skies, with Flamewing and the two Sourcewalkers both located within it.

“This is a weapon which I acquired from a Sithe who once attacked this place.” The black-robed Sourcewalker’s voice echoed throughout every part of the starry skies.

“Flamewing.” Ning immediately issued an order from within the estate-world: “War machines might be powerful, but activating them uses up an enormous amount of energy. Don’t worry about him. You have a virtually indestructible body and limitless energy; focus all of your efforts on tearing through this astral world. Rip it to pieces with your power!”

Chapter 36: Easily Accomplished

“Yes, Master.” Ji Ning’s command was perfectly suited to the Flamewing God’s temperament. It immediately unleashed an earth-shaking howl as it flapped its wings, leaving behind a jagged scar in the air as it soared towards the limits of this astral world.

The black-robed Sourcewalker simply watched calmly: “The forceful response, eh?”

BOOM! The ‘membranes’ of this astral world rumbled as the charging Flamewing’s giant fleshy claws slammed into them, with the explosion filling the entire starry realm. However, this astral world remained quite stable; it didn’t even budge in the slightest. Instead, it was Flamewing who was knocked flying backwards by tens of thousands of kilometers.

“Sithe war machines truly are impressive,” Ning sent mentally. “This black-robed Sourcewalker may be far more powerful than most Hegemons, but there’s no way it can possess limitless power like you, Flamewing. Ignore all else and just launch repeated attacks. A hundred attacks, a thousand attacks, ten thousand attacks... I want to see how long the Sourcewalker can resist you!”

“Fine.” Flamewing’s confidence was soaring thanks to its master’s words, and it once more sent itself slamming into the edges of the realm.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Flamewing used all of its power to slam into the edges of the realm, moving in a fairly rhythmic manner. Seeing this, the black-robed Sourcewalker slowly shook his head.

Whoosh. The Sourcewalker willed it, and the strange energy that had covered this area of a trillion kilometers instantly dissipated, flying back into the globe in front of the Sourcewalker. The world around them once more reverted to the normal icy world.

“He gave up.” Ning felt a sense of delight.

“Don’t misunderstand. I’m not afraid of you.” The black-robed Sourcewalker’s voice boomed out, echoing through the skies: “The

dimension formed by this Sithe war machine is incredibly stable and is not easily breached. I, Daoist Towerdawn, have wandered the Chaosverse for countless years and have many tricks up my sleeve. Even if I cannot kill you, it would be very easy for me to keep you trapped here! If you wish to leave this place, you must go through the tempest region. Even if no one is bothering you, it will take you a hundred million years to fly through it! If I chose to interfere, you might be able to stay alive but you'll never be able to escape."

Ning's heart sank. Indeed, the only way out was to slowly fly out rather than warp through spacetime. The black-robed Sourcewalker was probably telling the truth. However, thanks to Flamewing's power it wouldn't be that easy for him to trap them either.

Whoosh. The realmship appeared next to the Flamewing, with Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw inside of it. They didn't dare to leave it, for fear of being ambushed.

"You talk a big game," Azurefiend called out. "Why did you put away that Sithe weapon, then?"

"Haha..." Daoist Towerdawn actually let out a rare laugh. This caused the armored Sourcewalker to stare at him in astonishment. His big brother almost always had an icy look on his face, and he rarely laughed.

"You were able to defeat my formation with ease. I refuse to believe this Chaos Primordial learned the art of formations! That means one of you two has to be a formations expert." Daoist Towerdawn's gaze was cold and calm as he stared at Ning's realmship. "That's why I feel that there's no need for us to fight."

"All you want is a Daomerge Firecloud Flower, right? Those things are of no use to us at all. I want your help in breaching a formation. If my guess is correct, you need the flower for the white-robed Daolord inside the realmship, yes? So long as you help me breach that formation, I'll gift the flower to you! Not just that; I'll give you other Daomerge treasures as well, like the Spirit Incense-Fruit. I'll give them all to you!"

"But big brother! The Spirit Incense-Fruit is delicious!" the armored

Sourcewalker couldn't help but interrupt. Daoist Towerdawn cast him a cold gaze, causing him to instantly shut his mouth and fall silent.

"Breach a formation?" Ning and Azurefiend were both intrigued as they considered this from within the realmship. If they could avoid a fight, they would prefer to do so. Clearly, this Sourcewalker wasn't easy to deal with! Azurefiend sent mentally, "Darknorth, the Daomerge Firecloud Flower and the Spirit Incense-Fruit are only useful to Daolords; they aren't all that valuable to Sourcewalkers or Eternal Emperors! He probably won't try to cheat you."

"This works for me. However, you must swear a lifeblood oath on this," Ning said.

"Very well. However, I do want to let you know something; the entire Icewind Sea only holds a single Daomerge Firecloud Flower, and it is still growing. I estimate that it'll take tens of thousands of chaos cycles before it ripens! Even if you accelerate time, you'll only be able to accelerate it by a ratio of 1000x; otherwise, you'll impact its growth cycle. In other words, you'll have to wait a minimum of a few dozen chaos cycles before you can actually obtain it."

"That's fine." Ning had suspected this would be possible, as Daomerge Firecloud Flowers had to be used within a thousand years of ripening. Thus, any ones he encountered were likely to be unripe. These marvelous flowers needed extremely long periods of time to grow. A few dozen chaos cycles... this was a fairly long period of time, but he needed to make other preparations for his Daomerge as well. Once the flower bloomed, he would need to immediately begin the Daomerge.

"Very well. I need you to unlock the restrictive seals covering this shield." Daoist Towerdawn waved his hand, causing a bronze shield which was roughly nine meters long to immediately appear before him. This shield had the enormous face of a beast as its motif, and it emanated a mysterious yet dominating aura.

"This is something I came across by accident when I was wandering the borders of the Sithe homelands, but I've been unable to defeat the

formations sealing it,” Daoist Towerdawn said.

“The Sithe homelands?” Ning and Azurefiend were both surprised.

“Yes, the homeland of the entire Sithe race,” Daoist Towerdawn said. “Don’t ask any more questions; the only task before you is for you to unlock these seals.”

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Ning and Daoist Towerdawn both swore lifeblood oaths. Only then did Ning exit his realmship.

Whoosh. Daoist Towerdawn rapidly shrank in size from 540,000 meters to a height equivalent to Ning’s. He glanced at the armored Sourcewalker, who obediently shrank down as well.

Ning, Azurefiend, Whitethaw, and Flamewing all walked over as well.

“What cowards,” the armored Sourcewalker mumbled.

“They are simply being cautious,” Daoist Towerdawn said, then glanced at Ning and the other two. “If you can breach the restrictions covering this shield, it shall be as I swore. If not, you can forget about acquiring those treasures.”

Ning walked straight over to the shield as he said, “Don’t worry, if I can’t break it we can just keep fighting if that is what you wish. There’ll be plenty of time for that.”

“Grr...” Flamewing let out a low growl towards the two Sourcewalkers.

“Hah! You really do have a Sithe treasure here.” Ning nodded. “It is actually covered with seven layers of restrictive seals. This has to be an extremely important treasure.”

“Early on, one of my friends guessed that since it is shaped like a shield, it is probably meant for defense,” Daoist Towerdawn said. There were many types of Sithe war machines. Some were strong, some were weaker. The chains which Ning had acquired had suppressive effects and could absorb energy, while the one Daoist Towerdawn had just used was able to create a dimension of its own. Realmslord Windgrace’s ‘Blacksun’ was

capable of allowing instantaneous teleportation across great distances and also had incredibly powerful attacks. The Realmslord's single war machine was so powerful that it could influence entire sectors, making it incredibly precious.

Ning nodded, then lowered his head to carefully inspect the shield. He smiled. "Interesting. The person who set down this formation can be considered an expert, I suppose."

The formations over the shield served to suppress and seal its power, making it quite similar to the chains which had imprisoned the Flamewing God. However, it was clearly much less complicated. The Flamewing God had been incredibly important to the Sithe; they had sent three Sithe Exalts to capture it, then had fashioned the chains which kept it imprisoned. There was no way this buckler was equivalent to a Chaos Primordial in value, and the person who created the seals over it hadn't been at the Sithe Exalt level.

The seals over the chains that had been around the Flamewing God? Now those had been complex! If it hadn't been for the fact that Ning had a detailed library of many Sithe formations, there was no way he would've been able to solve them.

He had been at a very high level of insight into the Dao of Formations, and also had many detailed guides. Despite that, he still had to spend hundreds of chaos cycles analyzing the chains before managing to succeed.

In comparison, the formations before him were far simpler. Ning had reached a high level of mastery over Sithe-style formations, and the formation before him was actually something which was written down within that library of Sithe techniques.

"No need to rush things. Let's take it slow. So long as you can finish before the Daomerge Firecloud Flower ripens, it'll be fine. You have dozens of chaos cycles," Daoist Towerdawn said.

"Dozens of chaos cycles? I'm gonna take a nap, big brother. Wake me when it's over." The armored Sourcedwalker turned, preparing to go take a

nap.

“No need for all that trouble.” Ning simply reached out and gently tapped the surface of the buckler. Instantly, a unique type of Immortal energy flowed out from Ning’s finger and began to silently break through the layers of formations covering the shield. In just the blink of an eye, all seven layers of formations were instantly breached. The azure shield immediately began to emanate with a terrifying aura that seemed to have the weight of mountains. Ning himself felt as though he could use all his power but still be completely unable to budge the shield at all.

“...big brother, didn’t you say that the formations were really tough?” The armored Sourcewalker stared in shock.

Daoist Towerdawn was rather surprised as well. Moments later, an overjoyed smile appeared on his face, and he actually slapped Ning on the shoulders in a very friendly manner. This caused Ning to feel rather surprised himself.

Daoist Towerdawn said with a joyful laugh, “You aren’t bad, you little Daolord tyke! I thought it was the skinny old man standing behind you who was the one skilled in formations. When I saw that it was you, I actually lost hope. I never would’ve imagined you’d break it almost instantly! You really are incredible. Feel free to take the Daomerge Firecloud Flower and the Incense Spirit-Fruit! Haha. Oh, right. I have a few other Incense Spirit-Fruits here in my estate-treasure. I was planning to serve them to any friends who came calling, but I’ll just give them to you instead.”

Chapter 37: Fifty Chaos Cycles in the Icewind Sea

Daoist Towerdawn waved his hand as he spoke, causing a jade green box to open in front of him. Within the box was five fiery red fruits that emanated such succulent auras, Ji Ning couldn't help but begin to drool.

"Thank you." Ning gladly waved his hand and accepted them all. Although these fruits might be of limited use to him, they would be of tremendous use to the likes of his good friend Ninedust or his master Subhuti when the time came for their Daomerge.

"No need for thanks. This is just like candy to me; the only thing it is good for is the taste. It's only useful to you Daolords." Daoist Towerdawn's attitude towards Ning had clearly improved quite a bit. "Come, let me take you to the Daomerge Firecloud Flower."

Ning's eyes lit up. He immediately led Flamewing, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw to follow Daoist Towerdawn and the armored Sourcewalker in quickly delving deep underground.

The depths of the Icewind Sea were filled with frozen tunnels. Daoist Towerdawn quickly led Ning's group before a spacetime formation.

"This realm of mine has many tempests within it, causing spacetime to be unstable. Even I am unable to warp through spacetime," Daoist Towerdawn said. "That's why I spent quite a bit of effort in setting up all these formations to stabilize spacetime in certain areas. I was able to create a total of eight stable spacetime tunnels that allow me to travel to various parts of the Icewind Sea quite quickly."

"Prior to this, we were forced to slowly fly normally," Azurefiend said with a laugh.

"Haha, when cultivators see us they are usually terrified and will flee immediately," Daoist Towerdawn laughed. "Very few are unafraid of us. Come, let us enter the formation."

Whoosh. The formation stabilized spacetime, creating a stable

spacetime tunnel that allowed Ning's group to be quickly transported to a different part of the Icewind Sea. Soon, Daoist Towerdawn led them to the location which held the Daomerge Firecloud Flower.

Deep within the earth, there was a freezing pool of water that glowed with azure light. At the very center of the pool was a flower that was slowly swaying. The flower had yet to bloom, but it was already tinged with a pink color. It had three leaves, and all of them were a fiery red color and seemed to be kissed by flames.

"That right there is the Daomerge Firecloud Flower." Daoist Towerdawn pointed as he spoke: "Once the Daomerge Firecloud Flower blooms, it'll be truly magnificent."

"So this Daomerge Firecloud Flower is located underground?" Ning was rather startled. "Daoist Towerdawn, is it really true that there are no other Daomerge Firecloud Flowers in the Icewind Sea?" The one which Realmslord Windgrace has spoken of was located in a valley. But of course, that was a long, long time ago; that flower had long ago bloomed and been harvested. Still, Ning felt that there should be others above ground as well.

"Daomerge Firecloud Flowers are very unique, and only a place as unique as the Icewind Sea can give birth to them. More importantly, the Icewind Sea can only give birth to one at a time." Daoist Towerdawn laughed. "Sometimes, it'll bloom underground; other times, it'll bloom on mountain peaks or halfway up a mountain. It can bloom anywhere in the Icewind Sea, but only one can ever exist at any point in time! This is my territory, and I know it quite well."

"It's true, there's only one at any point in time," the armored Sourcewalker agreed. "And it causes quite a disturbance when it blooms. There's no way we'd miss the telltale signs of it. My big brother is often roaming the outside world, but I always reside here in the Icewind Sea. I've seen hundreds of Daomerge Firecloud Flowers bloom, and each time the process is the same."

Ning nodded. Even if they had been able to sneak in undetected, they

wouldn't have been able to find the flower even after scouring the entire surface of the Icewind Sea. As for the underground area? The frozen underground tunnels were all incredibly winding and complex; it'd be even harder to find the flower down here, and their chances of being discovered would increase dramatically.

It seems that them being discovered early on and being forced into battle against Daolord Towerdawn was actually a good thing. It ensured they didn't waste too much time, at least!

"It only has a bud and stem; it'll be tens of thousands of chaos cycles before it blooms." Daoist Towerdawn looked at Ning. "Will you set up a formation, or shall I do it for you?"

"Allow me." Ning immediately stepped forward.

"Your formations are stronger than mine, and you are more detail-oriented as well." Daoist Towerdawn smiled merrily as he watched from nearby. He normally always had an icy look on his face, but today he was in an exceptionally good mood. This Sithe weapon which had puzzled and frustrated him for countless aeons had finally been unsealed! He had already bound it in secret and now knew how it was used. With this weapon at his disposal, he was now significantly more powerful than he had been in the past, and his status amongst his friends and peers would probably rise a bit.

Ning carefully and attentively set up a temporal acceleration formation around the entire freezing pool. Although Daoist Towerdawn had stated that the maximum was 1000x temporal acceleration, Ning only gradually and carefully increased the temporal acceleration rate.

100x... 300x... 500x...

Ning was afraid that he might disturb the Daomerge Firecloud Flower's growth patterns, but in the end Daoist Towerdawn was right; Ning was able to upgrade the temporal acceleration all the way to 1000x without any instability at all.

"Whew." Ning let out a sigh of relief. The Daomerge Firecloud Flower was at hand. For now, he could think of nothing else he needed for his

preparations. As far as external sources of support went, he had the Autarch's stone dais, the Stonefire Pearl, and a Daomerge Firecloud Flower. It could be said that his preparations were perfect.

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Ning temporarily took up residence in the Icewind Sea. Daoist Towerdawn and his brother welcomed him warmly, and eventually Ning learned that the armored Sourcewalker's Daoist title was 'Fireflame'. The Sourcewalker had clearly chose to live in a place like the Icewind Sea, and yet chose 'Fireflame' as his title. Ning really didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

Ning ended up spending more than fifty chaos cycles in the Icewind Sea! This was an extremely long period of time for Ning. His Primaltwin continued to remain within the Azureflower Estate, maintaining a 100x rate of temporal acceleration atop the Autarch's stone dais as he meditated on one technique after another, wasting not even a single moment of time. He spent a total of over 5000 accelerated chaos cycles in training.

In truth, given Ning's mastery over spacetime, formations, karma, and his Omega Sword Dao, it was quite easy for him to study other techniques. Even the most difficult of Daos, the Dao of Numerancy, Ning managed to learn after spending less than half the time he had needed for the Dao of Karma. This was because the Dao of Formations and the Dao of Karma both had many links to the Dao of Numerancy.

In truth, there were many Daos which overlapped with each other in important ways. For example, the Dao of Ice and the Dao of Water! 'Ice' was considered part of the Dao of Water, but the Dao of Ice was a purer extension of it which would allow one to walk farther along this path.

One Dao after another... Ning reached the Archon level in many of them, allowing him to gain many new insights as to how the vast Chaosverse functioned. However, as he suspected, he was unable to gain even a single new insight into his Omega Sword Dao.

There was no technique, no cultivation path, no insights which would be

of use to him in his Omega Sword Dao.

“I am making no progress whatsoever. All I can do is throw everything into the Daomerge,” Ning mused.

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The many years he spent in the Icewind Sea served to temper his heart, making his Daoheart even purer than before. All other thoughts had fled from him; his only thoughts were of the Daomerge.

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Ning, Daoist Towerdawn, the Flamewing God, and the others had all assembled deep underground next to the flaming pool.

“Almost. It’s going to bloom at any moment.” Daoist Towerdawn and Daoist Fireflame, the two Sourcewalkers, watched with looks of expectation in their eyes.

Ning stared intently at the flower in the middle of the pool. It was in the process of budding. Compared to before, the amount of marvelous energy gathering inside it had grown markedly more dense, almost as though it was about to explode at any moment.

Whoosh! Suddenly, without any preamble, the flower bloomed. Flaming energy swirled out around the surrounding area, forming a beautiful flaming flower.

Flaming clouds circled the area, ensconced by leaves. The flower had bloomed, releasing its beauty unto the world for all to see.

“The Firecloud Flower.” Ning murmured softly, “The Daomerge Firecloud Flower.”

“Hurry up and harvest it, Darknorth!” Daoist Towerdawn said.

Ning immediately stepped forwards and dispelled his formation, then sent his Immortal energy towards the flower. It easily covered the entire Firecloud Flower and then pulled it out by the roots. At the same time, Ning caused a jade box to manifest in front of him. The jade box opened, and Ning placed the flower into the box while setting up a temporal

deceleration formation over it.

The flow of time continued to slow. Once it reached the rate of a millionth of the normal rate of time, Ning realized that the amount of energy it took to maintain the formation suddenly skyrocketed to the point where even he couldn't endure it.

"Don't try to force it," Daoist Towerdawn said. "Once the Daomerge Firecloud Flower blooms, it has to be used within a thousand years. Otherwise, its marvelous energies will completely evaporate. You can cause time to slow down around it, but its energies will naturally try to resist. That's why it's impossible for you to completely freeze time around it."

Ning nodded in understanding. It was impossible for anyone to completely stop the Daomerge Firecloud Flower's energies from dissipating. If one could simply stop time around it, then it would be easy to harvest and then store Daomerge Firecloud Flowers for Daolords to use. However, at most one would be able to slow down time to a millionth the normal rate; in other words, at absolute most the flower could be preserved for roughly a billion years. No major power, no matter how mighty, would be able to accumulate a large supply of Daomerge Firecloud Flowers."

"It's enough. I'll have enough time to bring it back to my homeland." Ning smiled as he looked at Daoist Towerdawn. "Brother Towerdawn, I've bothered you quite a bit in recent days. It is time for us to leave."

"The Daomerge is the greatest obstacle you cultivators must face. You must be careful. If you succeed, we'll be able to meet again in the future," Daoist Towerdawn said.

Chapter 38: The Night Before the Daomerge

Back down on the vast ice continent, Daoist Towerdawn and Daoist Fireflame stared with heads raised as the realmship rapidly advanced into the great tempest high up in the skies.

“Big brother, do you think he will succeed in the Daomerge?” Daoist Fireflame asked.

“He trains in one of the legendary Omega Daos. His Daomerge will be very difficult.” Daoist Towerdawn shook his head. During the many chaos cycles Ji Ning had spent in the Icewind Sea, the two had naturally discussed the Dao with each other. “He is the only Daolord friend I have ever made. I hope he succeeds in his Daomerge.”

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Ning’s group spent more than a hundred million years in slowly flying through the tempest layer, then began to hasten back to his homeland.

The Daomerge Firecloud Flower was the most important treasure Ning had acquired in the Icewind Sea. However, he had also acquired fifteen Incense Spirit-Fruits on top of that!

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The Flamedragon Realmverse. Vastheaven Territory. Vastheaven Palace.

Whoosh. A realmship passed through the barriers protecting the palace, then descended upon the Darknorth Estate. Usually, the only people in the Darknorth Estate were Su Youji and Pillsaint. Ning’s disciples generally didn’t dare to come disturb them.

“Ji Ning.”

“Master.” Emperor Solesky, Su Youji, and Pillsaint all came out to greet him.

Ning and the others flew out of the realmship. Ning stored the realmship away, then turned and smiled. “Big brother. Youji. Pillsaint.”

“You succeeded?” Emperor Solesky asked expectantly.

“I found the Daomerge Firecloud Flower,” Ning said. “I’m planning to spend the next year preparing for it. I’ll also remake the formations and barriers protecting Vastheaven Palace! After that, I plan to initiate the Daomerge.”

“The Daomerge?” Solesky, Su Youji, and Pillsaint were all shocked.

“Master, you are going to attempt the Daomerge this soon?” Su Youji said frantically, “Master, you aren’t even close to your lifespan limits yet. There’s no need for you to rush! You can wait another hundred thousand chaos cycles before attempting the Daomerge.”

“What you don’t realize is that the Firecloud Daomerge Flower must be used within a thousand years of harvesting it,” Ning said. “More importantly... even if I delayed for a while longer, it wouldn’t be of any benefit to me in the Daomerge.”

There were literally no improvements he could make. He couldn’t even get a hint of a new insight with regards to the Omega Sword Dao. Waiting would be a pure waste of time. In addition, Ning knew just how difficult the Daomerge for the Omega Sword Dao would be. He had to be completely decisive and resolute in facing it; he couldn’t show the slightest bit of cowardice. His only chance was in charging through remorselessly and then succeeding!

“Master, you...” Su Youji’s eyes were filled with concern. “Be careful.” She had wanted to attempt the Daomerge alongside Ning, but she herself had just recently become a Daolord of the Fourth Step. Her Dao wasn’t all that strong, and as a result she hadn’t even reached the Verge of the Daomerge yet. Pillsaint was also a Daolord of the Fourth Step, but he also needed a great deal of time to prepare for it.

“Don’t worry.” Ning looked at Su Youji. “Youji, let me know when you are planning to engage in the Daomerge. I’ll have a present waiting for you.”

Ning could sense who truly cared about him. This was even more true now that he had reached such great heights in the Dao of Karma. Of the

three present (Solesky, Pillsaint, Su Youji), without a doubt Su Youji cared about Ning the most, and the karmic lines binding the two of them were extremely deep. She probably wouldn't even hesitate to sacrifice her own life to protect him, and so Ning naturally felt closer to Su Youji.

"Ji Ning, should we tell Hegemon Brightshore and the others that you are attempting the Daomerge?" Solesky asked. "All three Hegemons have requested me to inform them in advance if you are planning to engage in the Daomerge."

"No need to tell them." Ning shook his head. "I don't want to cause too much of a fuss."

"Fine. It'll be as you choose." Solesky nodded. Solesky knew that there were two reasons why Hegemon Brightshore and the others wished to be notified of Ning's Daomerge attempt. The first reason was because Realmslord Windgrace had requested it. The second was because they wanted a chance to prepare themselves! Once a Daolord failed his Daomerge, his truesoul would begin to disintegrate, but this was a fairly slow process. The more powerful a truesoul was, the more time would be needed before it fully disintegrated.

It must be remembered that even World God Northrest's truesoul managed to survive for nearly a chaos cycle before disintegrating. Given Ning's current level of insight, even if his truesoul did disintegrate it would probably be able to last for an extremely long period of time. Given that he was guaranteed to die and given how much time he had, who knew what he might do? Would he cause any trouble?

Many Samsara Daolords who failed the Daomerge would lose themselves and do as they pleased, doing some things which they normally would never dare to do. Some would become so crazy that they would massacre people in great numbers.

It must be remembered that Ning had the Flamewing God on his side. The more powerful a Daolord was, the more terrifying that Daolord could be when he went crazy. If Ning failed the Daomerge and truly became a demonic figure, then led the Flamewing God on a rampage... who could

possibly stop him?

“All I wish for during my Daomerge is peace and quiet,” Ning said calmly. “I know exactly what Realmslord Windgrace is attempting, as well as the ‘Lonely King’ of the Icepeak Army who has been slowly biding his time. However... I shall be the one to decide who I will give Flamewing to, if I give it to anyone at all.”

Ning knew that both were waiting for him to fail his Daomerge and then die! In truth, in his heart, Ning wasn’t willing to actually force Flamewing to serve someone else in the event that he failed his Daomerge and died. He wanted for Flamewing to be able to make a choice for itself.

“We’ll wait and see.” Ning had made some decisions regarding this long ago. If he failed his Daomerge and began to die, he would become an object of terror to others. If he succeeded? The results would go without saying.

“I don’t need to worry about any of that. I only need to do one thing... complete the Daomerge!” Ning was filled with a terrifying degree of focus on the Daomerge.

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Ning had mastered many different Daos during the chaos cycles he had spent in the Icewind Sea, including the Dao of Numerancy. He had also spent a great deal of time further perfecting the Dao of Formations for the sake of the Three Realms and Vastheaven Palace. He had studied many formations from both the Sithe as well as the cultivator civilizations, then used them as references in order to perfect a terrifying complicated grand formation.

This grand formation was formed by a total of fifty-two separate formations. Ning was preparing to set it up in both Vastheaven Palace as well as the Three Realms. This grand formation was incredibly profound; most likely, even a Hegemon who had reached that level via the Dao of Formations would not find it easy to reach this formation. This was because this was a formation that combined the essences of many ancient grandmasters; Ning was just setting them up in accordance with their

wisdom, then using his own insights to merge all fifty-two of them together.

These two different schools of formations were like Yin and Yang, merging together to form a whole. Even a Hegemon of the Dao of Formations who wished to technically solve and then breach it would find it to be quite difficult; most likely, he would need an extremely long period of time before succeeding.

As for using raw force to overpower it? Ning had so many treasures that he was certainly using only the finest energy sources for these formations. These tremendously powerful energy sources, when matched with these mighty formations, would ensure that not even ten Hegemons working together would be able to shake this formation. Ning himself was at the Hegemonic level of power, and so he knew just how strong this formation was.

However, Ning wasn't confident in his formation being able to stand up to Realmslord Windgrace's legendary 'Blacksun' weapon. The Blacksun was able to easily connect two extremely distant places together and was also able to unleash attacks of incredible power.

"The location and existence of the Three Realms has always been a secret. Everyone who knows of it has long ago sworn a lifeblood oath not to divulge its location," Ning mused. "If I fail the Daomerge, I'll do my best to leave behind something else for the Three Realms. However, there's a limit to what I can do. The rest will be up to future generations."

Ning felt quite calm and relaxed about this. He had seen both great joy and great sorrow. If he failed the Daomerge, he would die. The future of the Three Realms would indeed be up to the cultivators of the Three Realms themselves.

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Time flowed on, one day after another. Ning established formations in both Vastheaven Palace and the Three Realms, with the materials and energy sources he used being equivalent in value to the networths of three Hegemons! To Ning, however, these things weren't really all that

important.

The atmosphere within the Darknorth Estate in Vastheaven Palace was extremely quiet and peaceful. Su Youji, Pillsaint, Hegemon Azurefiend, and even the normally-rambunctious Flamewing were all exceptionally quiet. All of them knew that Ji Ning was going to attempt the Daomerge the following day.

“Tomorrow...” Ning raised his head to stare into the night sky. “Flamewing.”

“Master.” The chubby Flamewing immediately walked over.

“Tomorrow, I shall attempt the Daomerge. If anything happens or if anyone comes to interrupt me, take me into your estate-world treasure,” Ning said.

“Understood.” Flamewing immediately said, “Don’t worry. I’ll eat anyone who tries to cause trouble.”

Ning smiled. This was nothing more than a backup plan. In truth, it was his Primaltwin which would be the most important part of his Daomerge, as it was in the Azureflower Estate and would be completely safe. It also had the Autarch’s stone dais and the Stonefire Pearl; that meant its chances at the Daomerge would be the highest. Ning had even sent over the Daomerge Firecloud Flower to his Primaltwin. Since his Primaltwin and his true body were all part of one whole, they would both engage in the Daomerge together. Thus, if anyone came to bother Ning’s true body it actually wouldn’t make much of a difference.

“Alright.” Ning stared into the night sky, his heart feeling exceptionally at peace. After his experiences in the Icewind Sea as well as the year he had spent quietly preparing formations, he had focused his entire Dao-heart upon the Daomerge.

Suddenly, a certain desire flashed through his heart; before he began the Daomerge, he wanted to take a look at the Three Realms. He decided to follow through on this desire.

“I’m going on a small trip. No need for you to follow me,” Ning said. He

then took a single step forwards and vanished without a trace.

Chapter 39: Seclusion

Ji Ning arrived at the Three Realms by himself. Given his mastery over the Dao of Karma and the Dao of Numerancy, it was virtually impossible for anyone to see him if he did not wish to be seen.

“The Three Realms.” The white-robed Ning sat there within the void in the lotus position, staring off into the distant emptiness of the primordial chaos. Long, long ago, the original ‘Three Realms’ had been located here. However, the ‘new’ Three Realms had been destroyed and reborn numerous times by now as a complete chaosworld. It was never again divided into the Celestial Realm, Mortal Realm, and Netherworld Kingdom, or the three thousand major worlds and trillion minor worlds.

Ning sat there in the lotus position, staring silently into the void. His spirit, however, was pulsing rapidly. He felt as though he could see the Three Realms of old. Countless scenes flashed through his mind.

His thoughts turned to how the Netherworld Kingdom had suffered an attack from the Seamless Alliance, resulting in Ning being reborn into the world without having drunk from Granny Meng’s soup. He had been born into the Ji clan...

He had been born to his father Ji Yichuan and his mother Yuchi Snow. He had then become apprenticed to the Black-White College, met his first master Immortal Diancai, befriended Mu Northson, then met Ninelotus and Yu Wei.

Ninelotus was a straightforward person who dared to choose the person she loved for herself, but she was also a person who was extremely decisive. The problems with the Youngflame clan had resulted in them separating, while Yu Wei had always silently supported him.

During the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, Lu Dongbin and the Xia Emperor, along with countless other Immortals and Fiendgods, all watched as Ning and Yu Wei finally ended up being together.

Alas, shortly afterwards Ning had been taken to the Tristar Crescent Abode of Mount Innerheart, where he had entered the tutelage of

Patriarch Subhuti. By the time they next met, the Seamless Alliance and the Nuwa Alliance had already launched a furious war against each other...

“Yu Wei.” Ning continued to reminisce on the past. He truly did feel great sorrow and pity for his departed wife.

Those days, Ning had roamed and dominated the Three Realms. During the Endwar, he had personally reversed the entire outcome of the war, then departed the Three Realms to continue his adventures elsewhere. He had now reached such heights within the vast Chaosverse that even Hegemons felt dread towards him. Not only had he taken on a Hegemonic retainer, he had even tamed a Chaos Primordial and had Hegemonic power as a Samsara Daolord.

Given all of this, Ning could truly be described as a dazzling figure. He was far more dazzling than Emperor Heartsword or even Hegemon Brightshore had ever been!

But his wife? Her destiny had been far more calamitous and pitiful. During her previous life, she had been born into a minor grasslands tribe. Calamity had descended upon that tribe, resulting in her suffering endless torments which had transformed her into a female asura-demon. She had lived a hellish existence, with the Godking secretly manipulating her from afar. Although she was reborn as an Immortal in her next life, her soul had remained under the Godking’s control. She had been his pain, and as a result her heart had been filled with such worry and fear that she initially had been afraid to even confess her love to Ning.

In the end, Ning had come to her. Yu Wei had decided that she would rather accept her soul being shattered than bring harm to him, and so the two had ended up together.

Alas, the Godking had continued to threaten and coerce her. Yu Wei knew that she would eventually be exposed, and so she had a child with Ning. Soon after that child had been born, Yu Wei had been consigned to the hells and eventually had her truesoul extinguished.

Her life had been a calamitous, miserable one. The only bright spot in

her life had been the time she had spent with Ning and her giving birth to a daughter for him. Unfortunately, that moment of happiness had been a brief one.

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Ning spent that night seated by himself within the emptiness of space, quietly thinking back to days past. His thoughts were chiefly of the time he had spent with his wife, Yu Wei.

As a powerful cultivator, he was able to remember every single one of his previous memories with perfect clarity. Not even the passage of time could dim them in the slightest.

He didn't feel too many complicated or mixed emotions. All he felt was a tinge of heartache for his wife.

Whoosh. Ning rose to his feet, then turned to stare at the enormous flaming ball off in the distance. This was the Solar Star, and its light illuminated Ning's face.

"Senior apprentice-sister... I have already come this far on my path of cultivation. Today, I shall begin my Daomerge. This shall be my last gambit. Wait for me. One way or another, we will be together again," Ning murmured softly.

His Dao-heart, the entirety of his soul and truesoul... all of it was waiting in peak condition. The night he had just spent in solitary, silent reflection had caused them all to reach the greatest apex possible.

Riiiiip. Ning tore through spacetime and took a single step forwards, disappearing from the Three Realms.

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Dawn. Vastheaven Palace. The Darknorth Estate.

Emperor Solesky, Hegemon Azurefiend, the Flamewing God, Su Youji, Pillsaint, and Whitethaw were all up. None of them had rested the previous night. All of them were waiting, and the more they waited the more nervous and impatient they became. All sorts of mixed emotions

filled their hearts, as all of them knew what the Daomerge represented for any Daolord.

Whoosh. Ning appeared out of thin air, manifesting within the Darknorth Estate.

“Ji Ning.”

“Master.”

“Darknorth.” All of them rose to greet him.

Ning swept them with his gaze, then revealed a smile: “All of you came? What’s with all the long faces? It’s like I already failed the Daomerge!”

“Master, you’ll definitely succeed in the Daomerge!” Flamewing was rather teary-eyed. Of the people present, it had the least amount of control over its emotions. It emotionally relied on Ning much like how a child would rely upon a parent. It hurriedly said, “Master, you are much more powerful than any and every Daolord I’ve ever encountered, and more of a genius than any of those Hegemons. An Omega Sword Dao is nothing to you. You’ll definitely succeed!”

“Flamewing.” Ning walked over, patting Flamewing on the head. When he had first tamed Flamewing, his only thought had been to acquire a powerful servant. However, as time had passed and as the two got to know each other over the course of many chaos cycles, Ning had realized how implicitly the beast trusted him. Flamewing truly was like a child and was incapable of complex schemes. After so much time, Ning felt a deep sense of affection for Flamewing... and as a result, he felt a degree of revulsion towards Realmslord Windgrace and the Lonely King for harboring designs on Flamewing.

“Darknorth, you must succeed in the Daomerge! I swore an oath to follow you for a thousand chaos cycles. It has only been a hundred! We’re not even close to being done with each other.” Hegemon Azurefiend’s wizened old face smiled, causing even more wrinkles to appear.

“Don’t worry. Once the thousand chaos cycles are over, you’ll probably be begging and crying for the chance to continue following me,” Ning said

with a laugh. “When the time comes, I’ll have to think long and hard on whether or not I want you.”

Ning turned to look at Emperor Solesky, Su Youji, Pillsaint, and Whitethaw. He smiled once more. “Alright, no need to waste time on words. I’m going to go into seclusion and initiate the Daomerge,” Ning said.

“You are much more formidable than me. You’ll definitely succeed,” Emperor Solesky said immediately.

“Master...” Su Youji said hurriedly, “I want you to be by my side when I attempt my own Daomerge in the future.”

Ning nodded. He then patted Pillsaint and Protector Whitethaw on their shoulders, then turned and entered his estate. Pillsaint didn’t know what to say, while Whitethaw just watched silently. Although he was just a golem, he was sentient and extremely intelligent.

All of them watched as Ning’s figure disappeared past the great gates of the estate. Rumble! The gates to the estate swung shut, sealing it completely.

Flamewing transformed back into its true form, that of an enormous, flaming, winged ursine: the ‘Flamewing God’. It lay down in front of the estate, continuously sweeping the area with an icy cold look in its eyes. Clearly, it had chosen to immediately carry out Ning’s order to protect the estate! Starting from this moment, it wouldn’t permit anyone to disturb Ning’s Daomerge.

“Youji, relax a little. Being nervous isn’t going to help Master at all,” Pillsaint said consolingly. “It’ll all be up to him now. Supposedly, a Daomerge can last for a total of nine years.”

“Yes. It’ll all be up to Master now.” Su Youji sat down in the lotus position, closing her eyes and taking up a silent vigil.

Solesky, Whitethaw, and Azurefiend all began to wait as well. To them, waiting for nine years was an extremely short period of time.

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Within the estate.

The white-robed Ning was seated in the lotus position atop a golden altar. This magic altar was something which Ning had poured all of his efforts into after researching the Autarch's stone dais to the best of his ability. It was all thanks to Ning's mastery of the Dao of Formations that he was able to emulate the stone dais as much as he had, and he had paid a fortune in treasures as well. Despite his efforts, success in the Daomerge would still primarily be up to his Primaltwin.

His Primaltwin had the original stone dais, the Stonefire Pearl, and even the Daomerge Firecloud Flower. It was far better resourced than Ning's true body, but of course Ning did his best to outfit his true body as well. That way, his chances at the Daomerge might be slightly improved. He had given his true body some valuable spirit-pills, as well as the Stone Censer of Reunion. Perhaps his true body was only going to be 0.1% as effective as his Primaltwin, but every little bit helped.

But of course, once the Daomerge actually began the insights and experiences shared by the two sides would be identical. The two were two parts of a whole, and their souls, truesouls, and memories were all as one. As far as the Daomerge was concerned, there was no difference between a true body and a Primaltwin.

If he succeeded in the Daomerge, his true body and his Primaltwin would both gain eternity at the same time. If he failed, his truesoul would begin to crumble.

The white-robed Ning sat there atop his altar, while the black-robed Primaltwin Ning sat upon the Autarch's stone dais in the distant Azureflower Estate. As for Ning's two avatars, they went into silent seclusion as well. An avatar contained part of the truesoul and godsense as well; if the Daomerge failed, the godsense within the avatars would quickly begin to crumble, causing the avatars to perish. However, since the true body and the Primaltwin both had complete souls and truesouls, they were able to ensure that the process of decay was dramatically lessened.

"Let it begin," the white-robed Ning and the black-robed Ning both said

at the same time.

Chapter 40: The Daomerge Begins

Within the Azureflower Estate.

The elderly white-haired spirit of the estate watched silently, feeling both worried but hopeful: “I hope this kid can succeed. If he can succeed in the Daomerge with the Omega Sword Dao, he will have achieved something which no one has ever done before. Perhaps Master’s final wishes will then be completed.”

The Autarch’s wishes were simply too hard to achieve. After becoming an Autarch, Awakener had reached a level of tremendous insight and understanding, and he had many treasures aiding him. He had been alive for unfathomably more times longer than Ji Ning had, and he had reached incredible heights in his mastery of the Nine Chaos Seals.

There were a total of ninety-nine layers to the Heart of Eternity!

Even after having returned from the Icewind Sea, Ning had only been able to solve the first twenty-two layers of the Heart. He was far, far away from being able to completely solve it! In truth, the spirit of the estate also knew how unlikely it was that Ning would succeed, because even the other dazzling geniuses who had come before Ning had fallen far short of the mark of completing Autarch Awakener’s wishes.

“The Daomerge Firecloud Flower.” The black-robed Ning waved his hand, causing a jade box to appear before the stone dais. The jade box opened on its own, followed by a perfect Daomerge Firecloud Flower that was still attached to its roots and leaves to fly out.

“Let the Daomerge begin!” The black-robed Ning closed his eyes. Over in Vastheaven Palace, the white-robed Ning in Vastheaven Palace swallowed his own spirit-pills, activated the incense from the Stone Censer of Reunion, and then closed his eyes.

He began to visualize the inside of his divine body, formed from a total of 108,000 godgems. Each godgem contained his divine power, his soul, his truesoul, and more. They also contained Ning’s insights into his Omega Sword Dao.

Ning visualized the Dao-tree within his Jindan chaos region. The towering Dao-tree's branches and leaves were the material representations of Ning's insights. Countless insights began to resonate through his mind and soul.

What he needed to do was to gather together all of these insights, then transform them all and cause his Dao-tree to give birth to a beautiful Flower of Eternity! His divine body would then transform to become a truly eternal body. If he became an Eternal Emperor, every single one of his godgems would transform into a Worldheart, even if his truesoul was somehow extinguished. The godgems would forever give birth to new chaosworlds.

"The Flower of Eternity... an eternal body..." Ning exerted his will. Boom! Every single godgem in his body began to tremble. The godgems, previously coalesced with his fourth-step Daolord energies, began to disassemble and then advance to a completely new level of existence! The towering Dao-tree within his body was shaking as well, as all of the insights represented by those branches and leaves began to gather together.

If someone was standing nearby, that person would quickly discover that the white-robed Ning and the black-robed Ning were both beginning to glow with blurry sword-light. Countless streaks of sword-light emanated from Ning with such power as to cause even Hegemons to shudder. This was the light of the Dao! Or to be precise, this was the light of the Omega Sword Dao, and its power was covering him and protecting him.

Every single Daolord would emanate the light of the Dao when they began the Daomerge. This would be the most dazzling moment of their life, and it was only in this state that the Daomerge would even be possible. This was also the state one needed to be in order for the Daomerge Firecloud Flower to unleash its true potential.

"Arise." The black-robed Ning opened his eyes, staring at the Daomerge Firecloud Flower within the jade box.

The blurry sword-light emanating from Ning's entire body illuminated

the Daomerge Firecloud Flower, causing it to levitate into the air. Guided by Ning's will, the flower began to be surrounded by clouds of fire that gathered together into a half-translucent humanoid figure directly above the flower. This figure looked identical to Ning.

"My incarnation! The incarnation formed by the Daomerge Firecloud Flower." Ning immediately took control over the flow of time, having the incarnation complete a simulated Daomerge as quickly as possible.

If a Daolord like Ninedust used the Daomerge Firecloud Flower, a total of nine incarnations would be formed. In other words, one would have nine chances to simulate a Daomerge! If one took control over the flow of time and accelerated time for the incarnations, these nine simulated Daomerges would at most take perhaps two or so hours, at which point the Daolord could begin the true Daomerge.

"I hope this incarnation can last long enough to attempt a complete Daomerge." Ning felt hopeful. "Let's begin." The incarnation immediately initiated a simulated Daomerge, with a towering Dao-tree appearing within its body. The reason why it didn't form a complete divine body was because Ning wanted to conserve power; there was a limit to how much energy the Daomerge Firecloud Flower held within it.

Time passed, one day after another. The incarnation continued to carefully carry out the Daomerge, with the Omega Sword Dao insights embodied by the Dao-tree all slowly gathering together. Finally, a series of thick trunks began to emerge from the very center of the Dao-tree. These trunks began to manifest a total of two new leaves. One of the two leaves emanated an incredibly profound and abstruse aura, while the other emanated an aura that was incredibly titanic and vast.

Between these two leaves, an unremarkable little flower bud began to emerge as well. The flower bud began to slowly grow larger and larger...

"So far, so good. My path is the correct one. This is just how it should be." Ning felt a tremendous sense of confidence in himself and how things were progressing. The Autarch's stone dais and the Stonefire Pearl helped ensured that he was in absolute peak condition for this Daomerge, and he

was in a prajna-like state of epiphany. All sorts of scattered insights were rapidly coming together to form a perfect whole, with no flaws that could be discerned whatsoever.

One year. Two years. Three years. By now, the flower was so large that it could no longer grow any further. All of Ning's insights into the Omega Sword Dao, as well as the other scattered insights he had gained, had been infused into the flower bud.

"Time to let it bloom." Ning knew that the blooming process was the most dangerous part of the Daomerge. Many, many Daolords had attempted to make the Flower of Eternity bloom, only to see it wither halfway through.

Suddenly, his incarnation began to tremble.

"Eh?" Ning's face tightened slightly. Only now did he turn his attention to the Daomerge Firecloud Flower. He realized that the flaming clouds around it had almost all vanished. As the final cloud was depleted, the materialized incarnation suddenly vanished as well. As a result, the simulated Daomerge came to an end as well.

"It's over? The energies were all used up?" Although Ning was briefly startled, he quickly regained his equanimity. "Omega Daos truly are the hardest of Daos. I wasn't even given a chance to attempt to cause the Flower of Eternity to bloom via a simulated Daomerge," Ning mused. The Daomerge Firecloud Flower had enough power to allow a Daolord who had fused multiple Supreme Daos to simulate the Daomerge nine times, but he hadn't even been able to do it a single time! This had at most been half of a simulated Daomerge... and strictly speaking, it was the simpler first half. Even if Ning hadn't had a Daomerge Firecloud Flower, Ning wouldn't have made any mistakes during the first part.

"However... it still helped me save three years of time." Ning didn't let himself feel dispirited. Saving three years of time meant that his chances at succeeding in the Daomerge had increased considerably.

"And so... let the true Daomerge begin!" Thanks to the wonders of temporal acceleration, the three years of time which the simulated

Daomerge had taken had, in reality, been nothing more than a few minutes for Ning's true body and Primaltwin.

The white-robed Ning and the black-robed Ning simultaneously began to speed up the Daomerge process. Whoosh! The transformation process of the godgems began to speed up rapidly, advancing in the blink of an eye.

As for the Dao-tree in his body, it began to give birth to a new trunk upon which two leaves grew. A flower bud quickly appeared and began to grow larger, and it quickly reached its maximum size in just a few seconds. Now, it was ready to bloom whenever Ning chose.

"Let it bloom..." Ning knew just how the Daomerge worked. The Flower of Eternity was safe when it was merely a bud. Once the initial blooming process began, it was extremely easy for cultivators to make mistakes... and a single mistake would result in a failure in the blooming process, causing the flower to wither away! That would represent the Daomerge having failed. The truesoul would immediately begin to crumble.

If the initial blooming process was successful, the flower would slowly bloom more and more. This middle part would be comparatively safer, and the Flower of Eternity would grow more and more beautiful. When it reached its most dazzlingly beautiful form, it would gain true eternity for itself! This final part of the blooming process was the most difficult part of the Daomerge.

Ning had met Daolord Laya in the Starflow River. When Daolord Laya had failed the Daomerge, he had failed during the initial blooming process; in other words, the Flower of Eternity hadn't been able to bloom at all.

In truth, the blooming represented the process by which Daolords crossed beyond that final threshold to become Eternal Emperors! That moment when the Flower of Eternity reached maximum beauty was the moment in which both it and the Dao stabilized. This represented success, with the Daolord having become an Eternal Emperor.

Whoooosh. The petals slowly began to extend up the stem of the Flower

of Eternity, laboriously seeking to reach out and bloom. As for Ning himself, he began the process of leaping into a new level of existence.

BOOM!!! The Dao-light surrounding both the white-robed Ning in Vastheaven Palace and the black-robed Azureflower Estate began to dramatically increase in intensity. The countless streaks of sword-light began to skyrocket in power, instantly ascending beyond Hegemony. In just the blink of an eye, it actually surpassed even the Otherverse Lord level of power!

Rumble...

This terrifying aura of power instantly swept through all that sought to contain it. The formations around Vastheaven Palace were completely incapable of containing this terrifying aura, a supreme aura of power that vastly surpassed that of Hegemons and even Otherverse Lords. This was the most terrifying aura generated by the Dao of the Sword which had ever appeared in the Chaosverse... the aura of an Eternal Omega Sword Dao!

Emperor Solesky, Su Youji, Pillsaint, Azurefiend, Whitethaw, and everyone else all felt so terrified by this aura that their hearts trembled. It was as though every single cell in their bodies were screaming in fear.

Even the Flamewing God felt a sense of fear when this mighty aura swept past it!

Chapter 41: The Critical Moment

Within the Azureflower Estate.

Boom! The black-robed Ji Ning was seated in the lotus position. Suddenly, the sword-light coming from his body dramatically increased in luminosity and power! The might of his aura spread out in every direction, causing even the elderly white-haired spirit of the estate who was watching nearby to feel a tinge of fear. The spirit couldn't help but lower his head and hunch over. This was an intrinsic fear that came from the very core of his being. In truth, estate-spirits could be considered a special type of lifeform.

"Such power..." the white-haired elder tamped down his fear and struggled to raise his head to look at Ning.

The black-robed Ning was emanating countless streams of sword-light that were filled with an aura of utter dominance and exaltedness. The only time the long-lived white-haired elder had ever seen anyone like this had been when he had served his almighty master, Autarch Awakener.

"The Omega Daos live up to their reputation. If he succeeds in the Daomerge, perhaps the only people who will be a match for him in the entire Chaosverse shall be the Autarchs," the white-haired elder mused silently.

Once an Omega Dao became eternal, how powerful would it become? No one knew. This was because no one thus far had ever been able to accomplish such a thing. The vast Chaosverse had given birth to numerous Autarchs, but it had never given birth to an Emperor of an Omega Dao!

The Hegemons and Otherverse Lords, no matter how talented, were at most only at the Hegemonic level of insight. Beyond that was the level of Autarchy! However, one who made an Omega Dao eternal would surpass all Hegemons in terms of profundity of insight into the Dao!

"Only two beings can surpass Hegemony. The first are the Autarchs; the second would be an Omega Eternal Emperor." The white-haired elder

stared rather eagerly at the black-robed Ning, who continued to glow with that aura of infinitely awesome light. “Darknorth, there has never been an Eternal Omega Dao before! If you succeed, all of Master’s efforts would’ve been worth it.”

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The Azureflower Estate had been the Autarch’s personal, private training grounds. It was filled with barriers and restrictions of such might that it naturally was able to block out all auras, including that of Ning’s Daomerge.

Vastheaven Palace, however, was completely incapable of the same. The white-robed Ning within the Darknorth Estate of the Vastheaven Palace was also emanating blinding amounts of sword-light, and the power from his aura surged straight out of Vastheaven Palace and reached out to spread across the entire Vastheaven Everworld. In fact, the ripples spread out into the vast void outside as well. However, the farther the ripples spread, the fainter and harder-to-detect the ripples became. They quickly spread out to cover the entire Flamedragon Realmverse and then spread out into the endless Great Dark as well.

“What’s going on?”

“What is this sense of awe and pressure?”

The countless living beings within Vastheaven Palace, from the mortals and animals to the Eternal Emperors, all felt a sense of terror stemming from the very fiber of their being.

None of these living beings were injured, but in this instant the entire everworld fell completely silent. All of them instinctively knelt down towards the direction from whence this aura came, almost as if they were prostrating themselves and displaying submission towards an emperor.

This aura was the aura of an Eternal Omega Sword Dao! No one would dare to stand against this terrifying aura.

“Such power! Such might! This aura is far more powerful than mine. Not even the Sithe Exalts were this powerful!” Flamewing was able to

instinctively judge the power of this aura. There had never been an Emperor who reached that level via an Eternal Omega Dao. Someone who did would be more powerful than Otherverse Lords, Sourcewalkers, and even Sithe Exalts! Only the unfathomably powerful Autarchs would be on this level of power.

“So this is the power of the Eternal Omega Sword Dao?” Emperor Solesky, Azurefiend, and the others all felt completely stunned. This level of power was far beyond the Hegemonic level of power.

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Whoosh! A dimensional tear appeared at the very margins of the Vastheaven Everworld, followed by a snowy-robed, white-bearded old man appearing. This was Hegemon Brightshore. A heartbeat later two more tears appeared. A man with long green hair and a green beard emerged from the first, while a dazzlingly beautiful scepter-wielding woman appeared from the second. They were Hegemon Windrain and Hegemon Netherlily.

Riiiiip. Another dimensional tear appeared off in the distance, followed by five figures emerging. The first was a golden humanoid figure, while the other four were all onyx humanoid figures. This was Lord Wulf of the Icepeak Army and four of his Black Emperors.

“Such power.” Everyone’s gazes were focused towards the distant Vastheaven Palace. Vastheaven Palace was the source of this incredible, exalted aura. Simply looking at Vastheaven Palace caused them to all feel a sense of tremendous pressure! If Ning himself appeared, staring at him would cause them all to feel a sense of terror. This was something you would innately feel when you encountered someone who was at a higher level of existence than you.

“So this is the power which comes from an Omega Dao which has gained eternity?” Hegemon Brightshore murmured softly, “This aura is utterly terrifying. I’ve never sensed anything as terrifying as this.”

“Daolord Darknorth’s ‘Flower of Eternity’ has probably already begun to bloom,” Hegemon Windrain said. “If he can succeed in making it fully

bloom, he'll gain true eternity."

"Will he be dazzling for an instant, or dazzling for all eternity? The answer will come soon," Hegemon Netherlily said.

They had witnessed many Daolords undergone the Daomerge and thus they understood the process. The aura of the Eternal Omega Sword Dao which they could all sense wasn't being consciously produced by Ning; rather, it was something which naturally manifested as the Daomerge began. Only if he succeeded in the Daomerge and truly gained a complete Eternal Omega Sword Dao would he gain control over that terrifying level of power! If he failed? Everything would disappear like mist, and his brief moment of brilliance would amount to nothing more than a testament to how powerful an Eternal Omega Sword Dao truly was.

"He has begun the Daomerge." Lord Wulf stared from afar, a look of dread in his eyes. "How terrifying. If he succeeds in the Daomerge, not even the Lonely King would stand any chance against him."

"There's no way something as unearthly powerful as this can exist," one of his Black Emperor subordinates said.

"Agreed. If he succeeds in the Daomerge, he'll probably be invincible unless an Autarch intervenes," Lord Wulf murmured softly. "But if he fails... that'll be when he becomes truly troublesome. No one can guess what a Daolord who has failed the Daomerge would do. More importantly, the Lonely King also will be competing against Realmslord Windgrace. The struggle over the Flamewing God will probably be the greatest battle which our Icepeak Army has ever engaged in..."

Although the Icepeak Army had taken part in numerous great wars, it had never faced off against an opponent of Realmslord Windgrace's caliber. In addition, there was a third party to this conflict... Ji Ning and the Flamewing God who served him. Lord Wulf spoke the truth when he described this conflict as the 'greatest battle' the Icepeak Army would have ever engaged in.

"Daolord Darknorth won't go crazy, right?" The four Black Emperors were rather nervous. They had all witnessed the Flamewing God's power.

“Who knows what a Daolord who has failed the Daomerge might do?” Lord Wulf stared at the distant Vastheaven Palace. “However... we must give it our best shot, no matter how dangerous it is! There’s no way Realmslord Windgrace or our Lonely King would give up a chance to control the Flamewing God. They’ll throw every resource they have into it.”

The Flamewing God was more valuable than all the combined value of all the treasures Realmslord Windgrace and the Lonely King possessed. There was a limit to how powerful a Sithe war machine could be, after all... and the greater the power, the greater the cost of activating it. Each time Realmslord Windgrace wished to use the Blacksun to fire off an attack, he had to pay an enormous price. But Flamewing? It had a virtually indestructible body and could fight without rest. The Flamewing God was more valuable than the entire Icepeak Army.

However, only the likes of the Lonely King and Realmslord Windgrace were actually interested in trying to take control over Flamewing. The ordinary soldiers and generals of the Icepeak Army, along with the likes of Hegemon Brightshore, simply felt fear! This was because no one could predict how wide-ranging and destructive such a war would become. A war on this level could easily result in the deaths of Hegemons and Black Emperors. Even the likes of Lord Wulf would perish under the might of a fully-powered Blacksun!

The only ones who stood a good chance at surviving were the Lonely King, who had numerous Sithe war machines at his disposal, and Realmslord Windgrace, who had his Blacksun. Everyone else could very well perish!

Oh, right. Daolord Darknorth would be safe, as he could hide behind the Flamewing god. However... if Daolord Darknorth had failed the Daomerge, he might go crazy and become an even greater threat than Windgrace or the Lonely King.

“Ugh.”

“Let’s pray that he succeeds in the Daomerge.” In truth, some of the

Black Emperors were silently hoping for Ning's success. They would be nothing more than cannon fodder in a battle at this level, after all. Still... all of them knew in their hearts how unlikely it was that Ning would succeed.

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The white-robed Ning in Vastheaven Palace and the black-robed Ning in the Azureflower Estate meditated silently as the Flower of Eternity began to bloom with excruciating slowness.

"This is correct. No errors thus far." Ning was being incredibly careful. As soon as the flower had started to bloom, his Eternal Omega Sword Dao had begun to take form. Everything seemed so perfect and flawless... but if he made so much as a single mistake, the Flower of Eternity would instantly begin to wither and his truesoul would begin to crumble away.

He couldn't afford a single mistake! Thus, Ning proceeded very slowly with the Daomerge.

Time passed on, one day after the other, and more Eternal Emperors appeared around the Vastheaven Everworld. Ning's exalted aura had covered all of the Flamedragon Realmverse and had even stretched out into the Great Dark. Although the aura grew increasingly weak with distance, the majority of Eternal Emperors in the Flamedragon Realmverse were able to sense it. However, realmverses were so far from each other that the aura spread just a comparatively short distance into the Great Dark before becoming completely indetectable.

"Eh?" Roughly half a year after the Flower of Eternity began to bloom, the faces of the white-robed Ning and the black-robed Ning simultaneously turned pale.

Chapter 42: Sword-Heart

“Now this is a deadly problem.” Ji Ning had just encountered the greatest obstacle within the Daomerge thus far.

Why was it that Daolords all wished for the chance to completely simulate the Daomerge? It was so that they would have sufficient experience for the real thing. A mistake in the simulated Daomerge could be fixed in the real one.

Alas, even the Daomerge Firecloud Flower could only simulate a partial Daomerge for an Omega Dao. It could only simulate the Daomerge up to the point where the bud first formed! In other words, the only real benefit it brought to Ning was that it had saved him three years worth of time; it hadn’t given him a chance to actually compensate for any mistakes or errors! And now, as a result, the completely unprepared Ning now encountered an enormous problem which he had to resolve.

“If I wish to succeed in the Daomerge for the Omega Sword Dao, I must also master the fifteenth stance of the [Heartsword] art!” After spending half a year slowly blooming his Flower of Eternity, he immediately realized this problem.

Ning had originally thought that the [Heartsword] art was just a type of special technique that combined heartforce, divine power, and Immortal energy. He didn’t believe that it had anything to do with his Omega Sword Dao... but now that he had actually initiated the Daomerge, he realized that he was wrong!

It was connected! In fact, it was connected in a very important way!

Ordinary Emperors and even Hegemons didn’t need to worry about techniques like the [Heartsword] art during their Daomerges, but Ning was different; his path was that of the Omega Sword Dao!

“The [Heartsword] art focuses on training the heart, the heart of the sword. The more sincere one’s heart is towards the sword, the more perfectly one can merge heartforce, divine power, and Immortal energy. I was only able to master the fourteenth stance of the [Heartforce] art

because I realized that Yu Wei would not come back to life, and thus I came to understand the essence of 'Remorseless Unto Death'. I poured everything into the sword without any remorse... but that isn't enough. Although a sword-heart like this is enough to merge divine power, heartforce, and Immortal energy to a very high degree... it still isn't enough."

"I need a truly perfect and complete sword-heart! Only then can I also have a perfect, Eternal Omega Sword Dao."

He only came to understand this during the Daomerge itself. The many insights he had gained into the Dao of the Sword would form the 'body' of his Eternal Omega Sword Dao, while his perfect sword-heart would form its 'soul'. Only then would it be fully formed! Only then would it become a true and truly terrifying Eternal Omega Sword Dao.

This was why the [Heartsword] art was so marvelous, and why it allowed for one to merge all types of energy together, resulting in every single attack increasing explosively in might.

"There's a limit to how long the Daomerge can take. I have to comprehend the fifteenth stance of the [Heartsword] art. If I cannot, I'll definitely fail the Daomerge." When Ning came to understand this, his face instantly turned pale. There wasn't enough time! The fifteenth stance of the [Heartsword] art was incredibly difficult.

In truth, the [Heartsword] art was just a sword-focused energy-combining technique which Emperor Heartsword had created. There had been other major powers in the vast Chaosverse who had done the same. Ning didn't really need the technique itself; what he needed to do was to truly perfect his sword-heart.

Whoosh. One technique after another flickered through Ning's mind. These were the various similar techniques which had been created by the cultivator civilizations as well as the Sithe.

"What should I do? How should I make the breakthrough to the next level?" Although the state he was in during the Daomerge allowed breakthroughs to come much more easily, he still wasn't able to find the

key to the fifteenth stance.

“Wrong. Wrong. Wrong! The [Heartsword] art and the other techniques all came as a result of the unique hearts and minds produced by the experiences these various major powers had.” Ning’s eyes suddenly lit up. “In the end, they reached perfection... but they each walked their own paths! Every single cultivator will have different mental and spiritual experiences. If you try to force yourself to emulate their paths, you might be able to reach an extremely high level but you’ll never reach perfection.”

“This is why, despite the passage of so many chaos cycles, there has been no one save Emperor Heartsword who was able to master the fifteenth stance of the [Heartsword] art. That’s because one has to find one’s own sword-heart in order to reach this stance!”

The prajna-state Ning was currently in was an extraordinary one, and he was able to quickly identify where the problem lay.

In the early stages, the [Heartsword] art might’ve allowed him to walk faster along his path, but the farther along the path Ning went, the more of an obstacle the [Heartsword] art became. Thus, he had to discard it... because it represented Emperor Heartsword’s sword-heart!

“Then what of my own sword-heart?” Ning began to reminisce about all the experiences he had undergone through countless years of cultivation, as well as the many times he had trained in the sword.

Slowly... Ning began to understand.

One day. Two days. Three days. One month. Two months. One year. Two years...

The Daomerge allowed for a Daolord to enter the most incredible and marvelous meditative state known to cultivators. This wasn’t the first time Ning had thought back to his memories and his life, but now that he was in the middle of the Daomerge the insights he gained were naturally different.

“Yes... long, long ago, I once lived a life that was without worries and carefree. That was back when my mother and father were teaching me. In

the West Prefecture City of the Ji clan, I trained with them in sword-arts. I was so happy back then. I simply loved sword-arts; that was all there was to it.

“When did it all change? All kinds of different competing desires arose in my heart and in my cultivation of the sword. I sought to train in the sword to take revenge for my parents, to become famous in the Grand Xia, to kill the Godking and take my revenge, to revive Yu Wei... I entrusted all of my hopes to the sword, wishing to use it to make all of my hopes real. In doing so, my sword-heart actually became impure.”

“Even when I reached the stage of ‘Remorseless Unto Death’, my remorselessness stemmed from my emotions and my love of Yu Wei, not for the love of the sword itself. But...

“In truth, I really do love the sword as well.”

If he didn’t love the Dao of the Sword from the very depths of his being, there was no way he could’ve embarked upon the path of the Omega Sword Dao and reached his current heights. However, all of the many hopes and fears he had entrusted to the sword had resulted in his sword-heart becoming impure.

Ning suddenly thought of something which Autarch Titanos had told him: “Foolish child... sometimes, you have to learn when to let go. On the path of cultivation, excessive obsession can sometimes result in self-destruction.”

Ning had suddenly awoken to the truth. It was a true moment of epiphany! After spending three years of the Daomerge going through his many memories, he felt as though he had revisited his entire life... and as a result, he had truly awoken.

“Even if I cast aside everything, including all of my hopes and fears, I would still love the sword. I love it simply because I love it; there’s no need for any other reason. The Dao of the Sword is a vast and boundless one which allows me to experience many new things. Of course I love it. Why wouldn’t I?”

Both the white-robed Ning and the black-robed Ning opened their eyes

to stare forwards.

In front of each of them, a stream of sword-light manifested. The sword-light flew out in a beautiful, natural, and transcendent way. There were no strong emotions attached to it, no grief, no sorrow, no madness... it simply flew forward, illuminating everything around it with its brilliance.

“One Sword, One World.” Ning smiled. He knew that his sword-heart had reached the level of true perfection. In fact, he now suspected that Emperor Heartsword himself must have mastered the ‘One Sword, One World’ stance during the Daomerge as well. For those who had chosen a weaker Sword Dao, simply possessing a perfect sword-heart would allow for one to succeed in the Daomerge, even if one’s Dao of the Sword was flawed!

Emperor Heartsword’s Sword Dao wasn’t a particularly impressive one, but he had a perfect sword-heart and as a result had succeeded in the Daomerge.

Ning now had a perfect sword-heart as well... but he was attempting to master an Eternal Omega Sword Dao. A perfect sword-heart was just one component!

“My sword-heart has been perfected.” Ning immediately continued to the next stage of his Daomerge, causing the Flower of Eternity to continue its blooming once more. Now that he had a perfect sword-heart, the Flower of Eternity seemed to have gained a spirit, and it rustled in his soul much like a true flower would in the outside world.

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“It’s nearly been nine years.”

“The Daomerge can at most last for nine years. Daolord Darknorth’s Daomerge must be coming to an end soon.”

“I wonder if he will succeed or fail.” Within the Vastheaven Everworld, the Hegemons and the Icepeak Army were all waiting. The other Eternal Emperors, such as Daoist Bluestone, Emperor Goldisle, and Emperor Blackcloud were all waiting nervously as well.

It had indeed been nearly nine years since Ning had unleashed that wave of terrifying presence.

“Perhaps the Daomerge time limit for Omega Daos is longer than normal?” Hegemon Netherlily suggested curiously.

“Who knows?” Hegemon Brightshore shook his head.

“Let’s just wait. We’ll see a result soon,” Hegemon Windrain said.

All of the Hegemons and Emperors were waiting, as were Hegemon Azurefiend, Flamewing, Emperor Solesky, Su Youji, Pillsaint, and Ning’s disciples and fellow apprentices within Vastheaven Palace. All of them were extremely nervous.

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“I’m almost out of time.” The white-robed Ning in Vastheaven Palace and the black-robed Ning in the Azureflower Estate both knew that they only had nine years for the Daomerge. The Daomerge Firecloud Flower had saved them three years of time, but they had wasted three more in perfecting the Dao-heart.

The Flower of Eternity slowly continued to bloom. There could be no mistakes at all right now.

“Time for the final push.” Ning could sense the growth of the Flower of Eternity within the Dao-tree in his body, and could also sense how his godgems had reconfigured themselves. It was time to take the final step.

In his heart, he already had a complete structure for his Eternal Omega Sword Dao. Whether or not it was the correct one could only be ascertained through actually using it in the Daomerge.

“There are no mistakes. Such a perfect Dao has to be worthy of eternity.” Ning was filled with confidence, but since he hadn’t had the chance to simulate a Daomerge he had to be absolutely correct in order to succeed. The slightest of errors would result in failure.

“I’m out of time. There’s no way to stop the Daomerge. Time for the final step!”

Ning willed it, and with a rumble his Flower of Eternity went into full bloom, revealing dazzling amounts of radiance. The godgems in his body instantly went into a brand new configuration as well.

Would the result be eternity? Or a withering?

Chapter 43: The Curtain Falls

The Flower of Eternity bloomed with incandescent light, striving to achieve eternity... but then, its light began to slowly shudder. The transformed and reconfigured godgems also sought to stabilize, but they slowly began to tremble as well.

The awesome aura of the Eternal Omega Sword Dao emanating from Ji Ning's body suddenly began to decay, with Ning's own life aura weakening as well.

"No! I was too hasty!" In the final instant that his Flower of Eternity fully bloomed, Ning immediately understood where the error lay in his Eternal Omega Sword Dao

If he had been given a chance to simulate the Daomerge, he would've been able to actually test out some of the assumptions regarding his Dao and discover its flaws. But he hadn't had that chance, and so he had to forge ahead without it!

Samsara Daolords took a total of four steps, and each step represented them treading the line between life and death! However, these four steps were all fairly short steps. They only led the Daolord to rise to a slightly higher level each time, which was why almost all of the truly talented Daolords were able to reach the fourth step. However, the Daomerge represented an enormous chasm!

Even when ordinary Daolords succeeded in the Daomerge, their power would rise by two full levels. As for supreme Daolords like Ninedust or Winesage, they'd immediately become Hegemons. Those slightly weaker would still reach the Archon level of power.

Ning's Omega Sword Dao would have an even more incredible result. The mysteries of the Sword Dao alone would result in him improving by two full levels of power, but he also needed to infuse it with a perfect sword-heart. In other words, advancing from the fourth-step Daolord Omega Sword Dao to an Eternal Omega Sword Dao would result in an increase of more than three full levels of power!

This was an enormous step he had to take, and there was no chance at all to test it out in advance! Even though Ning's preparations had been quite plentiful, in the end he had still made a tiny mistake.

"This must be the true Eternal Omega Sword Dao." Ning opened his eyes. In front of him was a faint sheen of sword-light. It looked very ordinary, with nothing special about it at all. It seemed to have no aura, no presence... nothing.

Rumble...

Unfathomably far away from the Flamedragon Realmverse, there existed a place. This place was where the prime essences of the entire Chaosverse were located, including the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword.

"So this is the prime essence of the Dao of the Sword?" Ning's mind could clearly and distinctly sense it from afar... and it was identical in nature to the Eternal Omega Sword Dao he had just understood.

Suddenly, a surge of invisible power swept out and surrounded Ning's consciousness. This power was vast and overwhelming but also as gentle as a mother's embrace.

Ning instantly understood. This surge of power was the power of the prime essences of the Chaosverse. The power was embracing his mind and... comforting him. It was as though the Chaosverse itself felt a sense of regret and sympathy towards this cultivator.

"So I am the only one who has ever comprehended an Eternal Omega Dao?" Ning understood what the Chaosverse was whispering to him.

There had been others who had embarked upon the path of the Omega Dao, but all of them had failed during the Daomerge! The vast majority of the failures didn't even have a technique like the [Heartsword] art available to them. Much like Ning, they had only realized how stringent the requirements for their Dao-hearts were during the actual Daomerge itself. Most of them had failed due to this. Occasionally, there were a few incredibly talented Daolords who did in fact have perfect Dao-hearts, but in the end there were quite a few errors in the Eternal Omega Dao they devised. Even though they eventually realized what their mistakes were,

there was no way for them to discover what the right answer was.

Ning had the Autarch's stone dais, the Stonefire Pearl, the Daomerge Firecloud Flower, and other external sources of support. He also had a perfect sword-heart and was at a level of talent that was every bit the equal of anyone who had come before him.

In the end, he had still failed the Daomerge... but immediately afterwards, he had instantly realized what the true Eternal Omega Sword Dao was. Alas, it was too late! He was now in control of and the master of the Eternal Omega Sword Dao, but he had already failed his Daomerge. Each person would only have one chance at the Daomerge. If you failed it, you failed it. Even the prime essences of the Chaosverse couldn't help but sigh on his behalf. Alas, there was nothing they could do; all they could do was function in the way their nature intrinsically demanded. Everything they did was simply an expression of their intrinsic nature, and in truth they weren't fully 'sentient' by the normal definition of the word.

All they could do was feel and express an innate sense of sorrow and sympathy for this poor soul.

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The Flower of Eternity withered away, its petals crumbling apart and falling.

It had been just a single tiny mistake, but that mistake was still enough to cause everything to crumble. There was no way for it to gain eternity.

Divine power and Immortal energy could be instantly recovered; they didn't count for much. The truly lethal aspect of failing the Daomerge was the dissipation of the soul and truesoul. There was no way at all to halt or reverse the crumbling of a truesoul. No one was capable of it whatsoever. Not even Autarchs were able to do this!

The white-robed Ning within Vastheaven Palace and the black-robed Primaltwin in the Azureflower Estate were both filled with Ning's truesoul. Their failure in the Daomerge caused the truesoul to begin to crumble. Ning's soul and truesoul had become incredibly powerful over his countless years of cultivation, and the Nine Chaos Seals technique had

further strengthened it to the Archon level... but it was of no use.

Hairline fractures had already appeared throughout every part of Ning's truesoul.

Crack! A tiny, crystalline piece of truesoul broke free. This fragment was translucent and dazzlingly beautiful, but as it floated away it gradually disappeared into nothingness, returning to the prime essences of the Chaosverse. Those who had their truesouls destroyed in a chaosworld would see their soul fragments be reclaimed by the prime essences of the Chaosverse. Those who failed the Daomerge would see their truesouls slowly and naturally fragment apart, also to be reclaimed by the Chaosverse. When the final pieces of truesoul were gone, they would die.

They could do nothing but watch as they slowly died. This was a very cruel end, and there were some Daolords who would be driven mad as a result.

The aura of life disappeared from both of Ning's avatars, and the truesoul within Ning's main body and Primaltwin both began to crumble...

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Ning arose from the altar. Even before the Daomerge had began, he had already prepared himself for the possibility of failure.

"For one who has found the Dao in the morning, death in the evening is nothing. I may have failed, but my failure has allowed me to find the true Eternal Omega Sword Dao. Compared to many other cultivators, I'm quite lucky. Nothing in the universe will go exactly as one hopes." Ning's gaze was distant. He murmured, "Yu Wei... sorry. I still failed in the end..."

Ning didn't care too much that he had failed the Daomerge and would perish. Given how long he had cultivated for, why would he fear death? As for his family, he had already spent an extremely long period of time by the side of his parents and his daughter. The only one he felt a debt towards was his wife, Yu Wei.

"I thought that I was invincible, that I could do anything and everything. But in the end, there was a limit to what I could accomplish. My road has

come to an end." Ning waved his hand, causing a black jade stone to appear before him. This jade stone had already been cut to be roughly as tall as Ning himself.

Ning stretched out his right hand, gently stroking the surface of the jade. Sword-light appeared from the tips of his fingers, and as it swept past the jade, tiny bits of jade dust flew everywhere.

Slowly, the figure of a black-robed maiden became formed from the jade stone. Her features truly were dazzlingly beautiful, and her aura was quite extraordinary.

A hint of a smile appeared around Ning's lips. His wife, Yu Wei, truly had been a dazzling and beautiful person. She had been the most beautiful member of the Black-White College.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. Ning's fingers continued to flicker across the jade stone, causing the sculpture to become more and more distinct. The jade Yu Wei's hair seemed to flutter, and her eyes stared lovingly at Ning.

Suddenly, Ning came to a halt and stepped back.

The white-robed Ning and the black-robed Yu Wei stared at each other, their gazes meeting in the air. It was almost as though she was still alive.

Moments later, Ning regained his composure. With but a thought, he caused the sculpture of the black-robed Yu Wei to fly towards him while shrinking to become palm-sized. As it flew towards Ning's chest, a string suddenly appeared out of nowhere and pierced through it. It hung inside Ning's clothes like a necklace, pressed against his bosom.

Ning gently stroked his chest. "Yu Wei... accompany me on the final steps of my journey." Ning then waved his hand, causing all six Northbow swords to appear before him.

"Quintessences, arise!" With but a thought, Ning transformed the quintessences within his six Lifeblood weapons, upgrading them from the fourth-step Daolord-level Omega Sword Dao to the Eternal Omega Sword Dao.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! The six Northbow swords all emitted a keening sound as sword-light flared around them, revealing a terrifying sharpness. The light circulated across them, revealing that each and every one of them was changing and evolving from inside out. They immediately skyrocketed to the Universe treasure level! A good while later, the light completely vanished from them. Their power was now so reserved that they were like ordinary pieces of wood... but in truth, they had already become the deadliest weapons in all the Chaosverse.

This was because the quintessence cores within them had been created by the Eternal Omega Sword Dao, something which had never existed before. The Dao of the Sword was a Dao meant for battle and slaughter. In terms of killing power, these six swords had already vastly outstripped all other Universe treasures.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! All six swords flew back into the sheath on Ning's back.

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Vastheaven Palace.

"That aura of might is weakening."

"How can this be?"

"But..." Emperor Solesky, Hegemon Azurefiend, the Flamewing God, Pillsaint, and the others were all shocked. Su Youji's face was completely ashen and devoid of all color.

"Master."

"Senior apprentice-brother." Ning's students and 'fellow disciples' were all frantic as well.

In the air outside Vastheaven Palace were Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Windrain, Hegemon Netherlily, Lord Wulf, the Black Emperors, Daoist Bluestone, Emperor Goldisle, and the other Eternal Emperors. Some sighed. Some shook their heads. Some smiled with delight. Some had ugly looks on their faces.

All of them had their own thoughts and considerations... but all of them knew that Daolord Darknorth had just failed the Daomerge.

They had seen far too many Daolords attempt the Daomerge. If a Daolord succeeded, there was no way his aura would plummet like that. In addition, they would also sense an aura of true eternity about that cultivator.

“Darknorth, a dazzling and peerless Daolord, has come to an end just like that.” Hegemon Brightshore shook his head and sighed.

“Daomerges for Omega Daos are simply too difficult,” Hegemon Windrain said.

“Go ahead and report it to Realmslord Windgrace,” Hegemon Netherlily said.

The three of them had long ago received orders from Realmslord Windgrace to monitor the situation, and so they all began to send word back.

“Hurry up and inform his Majesty that Daolord Darknorth has already failed the Daomerge.” The distant Lord Wulf could already foresee the grand war that was about to erupt, but he didn’t dare to delay in the slightest.

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The Hiddenfiend Realmverse. The Blacksun.

A bearded, disheveled-looking old man walked out of a courtyard. He raised his head to stare into the void, his eyes filled with light. “Daolord Darknorth... he was such an incredibly talented figure, but he still failed. The war against the Lonely King shall come next.”

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The endless Great Dark.

A large group of onyx humanoids were clustered together within a realmship. Alongside them were two golden humanoids who were standing to each side of a silver throne... and a third golden humanoid

dressed in silver robes who was seated on that throne.

His gaze was as cold as ice, and the blood-red diamond in his forehead was beginning to change.

In truth, this man had long ago led the entire Icepeak Army to a place within the Great Dark that was extremely close to the Flamedragon Realmverse. He had been silently waiting for the signal, as he knew that if he was to fight against Realmslord Windgrace he couldn't afford to get there late.

"Your Majesty, Lord Wulf sends word. Daolord Darknorth has failed the Daomerge!" a gray-robed Emperor said respectfully.

"As expected, he failed." The Lonely King rested his arms on the armrests of his throne, then said softly, "Windgrace... let's see if you win or if I win."

"Head out!"

BOOM! The realmship tore through spacetime and immediately began to warp towards the Flamedragon Realmverse.

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